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SELF-FORMATION;

OR, THE

HISTORY OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND:

INTENDED AS

A GUIDE FOR THE INTELLECT THROUGH DIFFICULTIES TO SUCCESS.

BY A FELLOW OF A COLLEGE.

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"Omnis boni principium intellectus cogitabundus." — Vetus Auctor.

"Necessario enim requiritur ut melior ac perfectior intellectus humani usus atque adoperatio introducatur." — Lord BACON.

**"So build we up the being that we are;
Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,
We shall be wise perforce." — WORDSWORTH.**

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE LONDON EDITION.

TRANSFER FROM LENOX.

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**WM. CROSBY AND H. P. NICHOLS,
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PREFACE

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

No further apology need be given for offering the present work to the notice of the American public, in a form adapted to the means of the largest class of readers, than the general consent of those who have made use of it — among whom might be named many most eminently qualified to judge in the matter — that it is, ~~almost~~ without question, the most valuable and useful work upon the subject of self-education that has yet appeared in our own if not in any other language. It is perfectly original both in plan and execution, and *meets the case*, as no other, among the multitudinous books which have appeared with a similar design, has at all succeeded in doing. It is precisely what the unaided searcher for mental elevation and improvement wants to give him impulse, aid, and encouragement in the arduous and often disheartening task of self-discipline. The writer goes over with him, step by step, the very path he is to tread, *pointing out the obstacles and difficulties in the way, and showing how they may best be met and over-*

come. And he does it, too, in so interesting and agreeable a manner, and with so little assumption of a teacher's authority, that we are insensibly attracted and led on ; our pride, and our fears, and our doubts are allayed and removed ; our minds are stimulated to reflection ; and our awakened interest and curiosity irresistibly impel us to try the experiments and methods he indicates ; and we find that success is, in truth, within our reach much in proportion to the fidelity and perseverance with which we follow them out. We seem to be accompanying an entertaining and instructive companion over a pleasant road, rather than listening to the lessons of a professed instructor.

To him to whom self-education is the only instruction he can have,—and, without this, all that the best institutions and teachers can do is little better than thrown away ; while with it, the loss of them may be very much if not entirely made up,—there can be no better aid in teaching him to think, to speak, and to compose, than this book ; while the best-instructed mind cannot fail to gather from its perusal many valuable hints and suggestions, and to have a profitable turn given to its meditations and speculations. When known and appreciated, it cannot fail to attract wide notice, and—at the present time especially, when the immense circulation of books in the cheap form have impelled multitudes who never before attended to the matter to seek for mental pleasures and mental culture — to accomplish extensive and important good.

CAMBRIDGE, Feb. 23, 1846.

INTRODUCTION.

It is curious to observe the prefatory addresses of most young authors. It should seem that they are abashed at their own appearance ; frightened at the shadows that they cast before them. They are aware of the multitude of books already written upon their subject, and of the weariness of flesh consequently inflicted upon readers. They profess doubt and distrustfulness. The task is probably beyond their power, — nevertheless they presume to hope, — they have been cheered by the approval of certain friends, therefore they crave permission, — and so on, through half a score unmeaning pages, sounding all the while the very base string of humility, deprecating censoriousness, and humbling themselves that they may be exalted. But why, if their hopes were really so like despair, and their chief object barely to escape censure, why not remain quiet ? “ Silence,” the Greek proverb tells us, “ is sure of her reward ; seldom does she repent herself.” But, in my judgment, all this profession of humility is a very bad practice. The man who proposes himself as a teacher of the public is better and more beseemingly fitted with the dignity of the master, than with the deferential lowliness of the disciple.

Accordingly, I shall make no apology for my attempt ; *though, doubtless, if it be a sin in authorship to deal in*

old wares, I am the most offending soul that ever lived. Of all subjects in the world, that of the mind and its attributes is the most hackneyed. Metaphysics are as stale as mythology, as flat and weary to the reader, and far more unprofitable to the bookseller. We need not wonder at the superfetation ; it could hardly be otherwise, if we look to the character of the subject, — a subject in its importance and direct relation to our welfare second only to religion, and, moreover, intimately allied to it. We cannot, therefore, marvel at the preference, but it is the preference of it solely, and not its prosecution, that has done honor to the discernment of philosophers. We have a world of treatises about it, but little or nothing, in my judgment, to the point or purpose of it. With all that has been said and written, the very source itself, the fountain-head, so far from being exhausted, has scarcely been opened or even touched. The people concerned about it have been digging, and boring, and excavating, till they have choked it up, instead of clearing it for a free course. The subject is literally a subject still, overlaid by heaps of comment, and hard to be extricated from them into light. There has been a prodigious deal of labor without effect, of hurry without expedition, satiety without satisfaction. In general, no precise issue has been proposed ; consequently, all the stir that has been made through the long, intricate passages, and in the dark corners of metaphysics, has been effectual only to raise the dust, and with it to blind the eyes of the inquirers, instead of clearing it away. True it is ancient, and learned, and venerable dust, and therefore, from those very qualities, so much the darker and more obscuring.

Such a statement will appear strange to the uninitiated. I will endeavour to explain the facts upon which it is *principally founded*. The books and treatises now ex-

tant upon the mind have been written professedly, for the most part, not so much to point out the means of its improvement as to describe its actual conditions, its qualities, faculties, and operations ; to show it as it is, rather than as it might be, — in its fixedness, rather than in its development, — not as it learns, but as it works ; in other words, to illustrate the science of metaphysics. Now this undoubtedly is a subject of much interest and curiosity ; and its study, when cautiously prosecuted, may be useful in strengthening the judgment, sharpening the discriminative power, and quickening the general intellect. But the use is mainly in the prosecution ; the results here, as in mathematics, are comparatively of little worth. It is of small importance to us that we should be acquainted with the nature and the various modifications of judgment, memory, and reflection, if we possess not the very faculties themselves. If the instrument be hung out of our reach, it is in vain, or nearly so, that we may be told of its uses and its properties. No one can become a painter merely by listening to a description of the works of Raphael or Rubens. The creative faculty is from within. So much for the study of metaphysics. We may say of it, what Butler has said of another pretended science,

“ All the rhetorician’s rules
Are but the naming of his tools.”

Then, as for the books and methods intended for the improvement of the mind, and not merely for its description and nomenclature, they are numerous enough, in all conscience, but none of them effectual for my purpose. They are almost wholly institutional, — subservient, that is, to the processes of alien education, — the education of a child by its parents, or a schoolboy by his master. It is evident, then, that they do not in any way interfere with my present project. They are busy about many

things, full of warnings and injunctions as to the way of instructing others ; but they are silent upon the one great and paramount method, the method of self-instruction. This is the field that is now open to me, a field hitherto untrodden, or, at all events, but very scantily and carelessly cultivated ; and this, although it be in itself of a rich and a most gracious soil. I am about to become a laborer in it ; my auspices are good, the fault will be my own if it produce not a full harvest.

In the definition given by me above, I have been anticipated by more than one writer. It has been observed, repeatedly, that there are two kinds of education, one, wherein we are taught by those about us, and another, wherein we teach ourselves ; that the former method is the more common, and the latter infinitely the more valuable and effective. This is admitted universally, and, to my judgment, it is indeed astonishing that we should have been so busy about the less worthy of these two subjects, while we have neglected almost, if not altogether, the far worthier one ; that the universal young mind should have been weighed down to the very dust by the multitude of institutional books, while the spirit of self-instruction is left to be stifled under the heap, or, at best, to find its own way up to the surface. One would suppose, from this neglect, that it is the easiest of all possible uses, as easy as the exercise of the senses, as natural as seeing or hearing ; whereas, in plain truth, nothing is so difficult. Self-instruction and thoughtfulness are nearly, if not entirely, convertible terms ; and to think well and effectually is to do more than one man in a thousand is able to do. The art of thinking is the key of philosophy, and its mastery is nothing else than the perfection of the intellect.

I have made the statement of this neglect, and now let *us look to its consequences*. In the upper ranks of our

society, the first twenty-two years of a man's life are usually devoted to education; little else is regarded during that whole time. His education is in process, and it must have run its course out ere he can be allowed to enter on any thing else. The fact is so, as we all know by our experience; but this is a large portion of our life, and its employment is a weighty and a fearful consideration. And how are we requited for our outlay? Or rather let us first inquire, What is its precise object? Put the question to any man, ask him for what purpose he is educating his son, and we may easily anticipate his answer. "Surely," he would say, "that he may be a wiser and a better man"; or, this being interpreted, that he may be informed with useful knowledge, made rational and dispassionate, righteous, benevolent, and Christian-like. This, then, is the object; and now, among the thousands who finish their education every year, and go out into the world, in how many is it answered? Here and there perhaps one; the rest remain as they were before, the children of utter darkness. Thus it is,—our common method of education succeeds but rarely, and fails very generally. Therefore it is a bad one; bad necessarily and essentially, from its own proper viciousness.

There is matter enough of complaint in the mere fact that so many of us learn so little, with all the time, and labor, and expense bestowed upon our education. But this is a necessary evil. Education is a varied game. There is much of chance in the cards, as well as much skill in the management of them, and therefore we cannot hope always to be successful. We may be provident, and watchful, and judicious; yet, with all that, it is not every seed that will come to fruit, or even to flower. Whatever method we may take, dissolute and perverse *spirits there must always be*, hardly at the first accessible

to it, or susceptible of improvement from it ; and, at last, armed against it completely, in the callousness of their own customs. This is the fault of the individual, or of his early habits and circumstances, rather than of the system. But the system, as it stands at present, has another fault exclusively its own, and that of a very dark dye. It is this. Not merely does it miss in many cases its professed object, but, even where it attains that object, it is still as far as ever from the due and legitimate end of education,—the formation of an independent mind. Its principles are false. In the language of Lord Bacon, “it has set up an idol for its object,” an idol like the old Dagon, apter to fall upon its worshippers and overwhelm them, than to further them to their good.

We have examples of this truth by scores and hundreds in our schools and colleges. We see students able, and willing, and most assiduous to learn ; assiduous, indeed, as a hen over an addled egg ; but, alas ! their assiduity shows itself but seldom in the fruits of useful activity. As education is now practised, their learning is too often but a nightmare to them, overlaying and oppressing them ; and, instead of breathing into their senses the comfort of a gentle spirit, prone to suggest forms of hatefulness, melancholy imaginings, discontent, moodiness, and despair. We cannot impart warmth to the cold carcass, or quicken its deadness into energy, by wrapping it in a multiplicity of garments, though they be wrought finely and curiously. The use of learning is to propel the natural fire within us, and call it into action. Therefore it should be laid on lightly.

But the instructors of our “ingenuous youth” proceed upon another principle. They are all for cramming their pupils to the utmost of their capacity. Much like the simple man who would fain have a fountain in his garden, and, to effect his purpose, must needs be pour-

ing out pailsfull of water on some particular spot, for hours together ; whereby, though he failed of his fountain, he got a most delectable swamp instead of it. Had he bestowed his labor differently, and contented himself with making an issue for the natural humor, he might have succeeded better. The source is from within.

Evidently, to learn thus is to make the mind a vessel rather than a machine ; to make its uses consist in its capacity, and not in its working qualities. And to what can this capacity serve us, if we merely heap up our stores in it, and there suffer them to rot ? The mind, or to speak more exactly the memory, may be full crammed, and withal be as powerless and inert as a mere carcass. It is so in the natural body ; though the stomach be stuffed to the very gorge, and the veins filled to distention, yet this fulness, unless it is put into course and wrought actively through its issues, is no better than congestion, tending to oppression and apoplexy rather than to any wholesomeness of effect.

Not that I would denounce book-learning when used according to its true uses. There is a season for all things ; a season to provide materials, and this is the age of boyhood ; also a season to work those materials into frame, still adding to them upon occasion, lest the stock fall short of our exigencies ; this is the duty of youth and manhood. We must learn an alphabet before we can teach ourselves a language.^X We must do as children, childishly, that we may be prepared to do like men, rationally. Only we must not so walk, thoughtlessly and passively, as if we were always to be in leading strings. We should use our borrowed capital as the means of raising a stock for ourselves, that so we may begin upon it afresh and on our own account ; otherwise, the intellect will become bankrupt, and all its fancied accumula-

^X Not at all. There are many who know a language & yet

tions prove no better than bad book debts, an unreal mockery, incumbrances rather than resources.

This prerogative of independence can be acquired only through the process of self-instruction ; this latter being the parent of self-sufficiency ; a condition highly prized and much vaunted by the old philosophers, who appear in this respect to have seen more truly, and concluded far more wisely, than their modern successors.

I conclude, then, that self-instruction is the one great object of rational education. In mind as well as body we are children at first, only that we may afterwards become men ; dependent upon others, in order that we may learn from them such lessons as may tend eventually to our edification on an independent basis of our own. The knowledge of facts, or what is generally called learning, however much we may possess of it, is useful so far only as we erect its materials into a mental framework, but useless utterly, as long as we suffer it to lie in a heap, inert, and without form. The instruction of others compared with self-instruction is like the law compared with faith ; a discipline of preparation, beggarly elements, a schoolmaster to lead us on to a state of greater worthiness, and there give up the charge of us.

¶ There is much of analogy between our moral and our physical condition. Here is a remarkable instance of it. The mind as well as the body is instinct with appetite, subject at intervals to a cravingness for new food. We read, the greater part of us, just as we eat, merely to satisfy this appetite and without any further forethought. Generally, this object is answered, and the void filled up without any great difficulty. But there is, or should be, another process in the case, that of digestion ; and this, though in order second to ingestion, is far higher in importance ; digestion, as we are constituted physically, is *necessary to our existence*, and therefore by the wisdom

of Providence it is ordained to be independent of our will ; we are merely passive to the process. Thus it is with the body, but with the mind it is far otherwise ; reflection, or in other words mental digestion, is an active quality ; it is only by our own wills, and by a strenuous, energetic exertion of them, that we can at all compass it. Here we have the reason why, in Shakspeare phrase, there should be so many weak minds in conjunction with strong bodies, that the latter should grow to manhood, while the former often remain in their infancy a long life through. To show how this digestive faculty is to be acquired, or, if I may change the phrase, to point out how habits of thoughtfulness are to be formed, is the subject of this book ; a high and most momentous subject ; for our intellect, and in a great degree our happiness also, depends upon it.

That this is the real truth I have not the least doubt, but the ordinary practice of mankind would seem to belie the proposition. Evidently, they are not very solicitous about this kind of intellectual improvement. However, it is not difficult to show that their negligence on this point is most unwise and mischievous.

All pleasure is of the mind. The body has no part in it, except as it is the medium whereby sensations may be conveyed to the mind. This, it will be said, is a truism. Possibly it may be so, but, as it is important to the proof of my proposition, I must beg leave to illustrate it.

For instance, take a child, or a savage, or a rough peasant, into a gallery of fine paintings. They will look about them, they will observe, they will examine ; with the outward sense, with the mere eye of the body, they will see every object as distinctly as the most intelligent connoisseur. But this must necessarily be all. They cannot from their constitution have any inward sentiment, *any true perception*, of the beauties offered to their gaze.

They have no mind for them, and therefore they can have no pleasure in them,—no communion with the spirit of the painter. His finest strokes are insignificant to them, as unintelligible and formal as the loveliness of a woman to the eye of a horse or dog. The daub of a sign-painter would have much more of meaning and attraction for them. Or bid any such person listen to the most exquisite passages of the finest opera of Mozart ; they would play idly about his ear, powerless to penetrate ; after a few minutes', not passion, but passiveness, he would be moved only to irritation, and, like Sly in “Catherine and Petruchio,” would fairly wish there were an end of it. Or show him a fine prospect ; doubtless he would take the range of it with his eye ; his curiosity might perhaps be excited by the novelty, and variety, and extent. For a moment he would be pleasurabley affected, but the impression would be wholly of the surface,—it could sink no deeper. If I had a task put upon me to find a human heart utterly hardened against nature, I would seek it among the muleteers of the Alps and Apennines. And this is true in a great degree even of the enjoyments commonly, though inaccurately, called sensual. They depend much more upon the mind than they are vulgarly believed to do. For instance, there is something very pleasant in good wine, or a good dinner ; but the pleasure is one mainly of association. An entertainment, whether in its idea or its enjoyment, is associated in our fancy with the ideas of gaiety, friendliness, and liberality ; these are referable to the mind, and without them the fulness of the table would be nothing,—the heart would be void in spite of it. This is clear from the fact, that, if a single link of the association be broken, the whole will often fall to pieces, and fail utterly. As, for example, if wine were presented *to us in a tea-cup*, we should hardly care to raise it to

our lips, though with the assurance that it was of the finest quality. And how is this? We are accustomed to drink it from a glass; and so in the case supposed our associations are disjointed, the chain is broken, and the spell of our fancy is broken with it. It is evident from this, that the essence of the enjoyment is not so much in the gratification of the palate as in the circumstances attending it. Otherwise, we should relish the subject equally and indifferently, however it might be offered to us. And as these circumstances, or their ideas, belong for the most part not to our senses but to our intelligence, so it is to the latter that we should address ourselves, to heighten, strengthen, and quicken it, if we would improve the quality even of our most sensual enjoyments, and so rise in our conviviality above the brute beast or savage, with whom a feast is a mere fulfilment of a want,—the removal of a pain, rather than the ministration of a pleasure.

But this last is a kind of mixed enjoyment, made up between sentiment and sensuality, and to neither wholly attributable. However, be it what it may, it stands for no very high figure in the sum of happiness. I am content to repudiate it from my account, and waive the advantage of it altogether. We need no such half-faced fellowship; for, after all, conversation is the very salt of society; it constitutes together with reading and meditation, in themselves or their results, almost the entire amount of our happiness. Without them we should be poorer than savages, destitute of their resources, with nothing of our own to supply the want. And it is only the discipline of the mind, however imparted, whether incidentally or of set purpose, that can improve these faculties, and develope them to the fulness of their power. There are many methods of this discipline, *scholastic, commercial, and professional*; of these, I believe

the order in which I have placed them may be taken, in a general way, as the exponent of their comparative efficacy ; the last being the highest ; but they are all precarious and imperfect ; the only sure and thorough discipline, the one absolute method of utilizing our resources to the utmost, is that of self-instruction.

Moreover, the tone and temperament of the spirit generally, as well as of the mind particularly, is bettered to a very high degree by this same discipline. With most of us, idleness is the parent not merely of uneasiness, but withal of fretfulness, malevolence, and the whole host of evil passions. The phrase, “an aching void,” may be ridiculous to those who criticise grammatically, but it is true to those who feel humanly. To supply this void is an object, and moreover a certain effect, of a regular, and sustained, and judicious method of self-instruction. The used key is bright. If the steel be wrought up and refined to a high temper, the cloudiness of the vapor will perish from it almost at the instant that it is breathed upon it.

These are great goods, great in worldly use and estimation, great in themselves, but small in comparison with another that is wrought out by the same process ; I mean, the sentiment of religion. For this sentiment, though it may spring from the heart, must be matured and perfected mainly by the force of intellect. Minds there are weak, loose, and waving, dissolved by their own warmth into fluidity, that will receive an impression readily, but have not consistence enough to retain it. Therefore the seal of faith is fixed upon them in vain. They are led with an idle word, blown about by every wind of doctrine, being unable to render a reason of the belief that is in them. Of such, zeal without knowledge is commonly the spiritual portion ; for they who cannot learn Christ, neither can they hope to know him. Not that there is *any thing in the gospel of scholastic mystery*. I should

indeed hold myself worthy of damnation, were I to follow the example of those who would interpret the word of God into the darkness, and doubtfulness, and deceitfulness of a heathen oracle ; who have raised each for himself a structure of *divinity*, to serve, not in the way of Christian edification as a stepping-stone for humble faith, nor yet for a temple of holiness, but merely and entirely as a monument of their own vain-glory and worldly-mindedness. Confusion on such a Babel and on its authors.

I do not therefore assert that one must first become a learned man ere he can be a true Christian. Preserve me from such a blasphemy ! Christianity is not a technical religion ; it owns not the privilege of the priesthood ; it has nothing of the exclusiveness and mystery — things devised by the enemy — of the Indian and old Egyptian superstitions. But I do assert, and confidently, that this temple of the mind, ere we can duly serve the Lord in it, must be edified, and purified, and prepared, and provided with all things fitting for the service. Its idols, to speak in Bacon's language, must be abased from their high places ; the passions must be subdued ; for it is only from the calm waters that the light of heaven can be reflected ; the rough places must be made plain, and the valleys level, for the coming of the Lord. All this is the work of reason, of the reason that abstracts itself from vanity, and compares heavenly things with earthly, that it may judge and choose between them. But is reason self-originated or self-existent ? Can it look forward and see into the qualities of things any otherwise than through that “eye of the soul,” consideration ? consideration, which, as our great poet says of his hero,

“ Like an angel came

And whipped the offending Adam out of him.”

Can the one exist without the other ? — No, it is not

possible. And then I say this faculty of consideration, this parent of reason itself, comes not by books, or by precepts, or by any other means, but solely by self-discipline and instruction. It is true that there have been infidels, men of great intellect and contemplative habits ; but this is no offence against my position. The soil was prepared to them for wheat ; if they chose to sow tares in it instead, it is the fault, not of the preparation, but of their own after perverseness.

It may be that I have not laid down these my premises scientifically, or technically. Indeed, I have not studied so to do ; but they are sure and safe in themselves, and the inferences drawn from them are, I believe, incontrovertible. If this be so, as I am well assured that it is, I have certainly no way overrated the importance of my subject. The mind of man is illimitable, so are the excellences of his soul. We know that as yet they have gone forward, each respectively towards truth and Christian perfection, but a very little way ; and so it must always be, as long as we depend upon others rather than upon ourselves for our advancement. It is not from impulse that we can reach the point proposed to us, but we have a principle of motion and of progression each within himself ; we have only to bring it into activity to develope it in the fulness of its efficacy ; we have only, in a word, to make the most of our powers of self-instruction, and so in things earthly as well as heavenly ; in science and in morality, we have such a prospect before us, such a long course of improvement, such a high, glorious ascent, as the tongue of man hath never spoken, nor ever his heart imagined. These it is my business to point out.

Such is my plan ; and now a word or two on my execution of it. Had my abilities been at all equal to my subject, had my mind “risen to the height of my great argument,” then truly I should have achieved a glorious

life's work, an imperishable monument, a token of gratitude and of honor to all posterity. Indeed, as I contemplate what is before me, I cannot but repeat my astonishment that the attempt should have been reserved for me ; that a soil so fertile and so deep should be yet virgin. But as to the issue, so far as it regards myself and the public acceptance of my work, I have no such high anticipations as the dignity of my subject might suggest to me. If this were my only hope, surely I should be of all men the most desponding. But I have endeavoured to do good, and the consciousness of that endeavour is my sufficient recompense. Besides, I owe a debt to literature, as my title-page shows ; I am a sharer in her revenues, and thus would I requite her bounty. There may be something, indeed, of presumption in this attempt to instruct essentially and philosophically, by a member of a college long since self-condemned of insufficiency to provide a tutor from its own body, to teach even in the common round, popularly and vulgarly. But what I have done, I have done ; and my book has at least this merit, that it is not a thing of clouds and speculations, as books on the mind are most frequently. On the contrary, as far as it goes it is practical, the result of my observation, the mere effusion of my proper and personal experience. In it I have not exhibited myself as a pattern, but as a being made up of faculties and infirmities, of good and evil, according to the condition of humanity. And indeed this to the student is perhaps the best possible encouragement. My frequent failures here recorded may be as useful in the way of instruction as my occasional successes. I know that sincerity such as this is always open to the ridicule of puny-minded men, and ridicule is the severest test of philosophy ; but for myself, armed as I am in truth and a good conscience, I can both *despise and defy it.*

Such are the uses of my book. If the reader should discover any others, it is to his service that I commend them. For myself, in taking my leave of it, I would say to it as to a parting disciple, — “ Go, and prosper ; may the blessing of God be upon thee, to the furtherance of his glory, and the happiness of my fellow-men.”

SELF-FORMATION.

CHAPTER I.

"The child is father of the man." — WORDSWORTH.

I was born, if there be no very flagrant error in the authorities, within the first twelve years of the present century ; a stirring and bloody time, productive of many marvels ; although, somehow or other, its heroic influence was all lost upon my nature. As astrology is out of date, the precise day and hour can signify nothing, and therefore I shall not give them. Indeed, I have chosen to be a little mysterious in matters of detail, not from any trickish design, but simply because I would fain keep the secret of my authorship in my own conscience, and eschew all such indications as may serve to identify me.

As for dates, then, I must waive them both now and hereafter through these my lucubrations. I am glad of it ; for I have never ceased from my childhood upwards, when they taxed my memory so cruelly, to hold them in utter aversion. Not so with localities, such I mean as are of a kind to take hold of our sympathies ; I love them tenderly, I doat on them ; especially when connected with recollections of my childhood, no tongue can tell with what affection I cherish them. Besides, they may claim consideration from me of right, as being akin to my subject, and that in no remote degree. The hardest hearted metaphysician must allow that local circumstances, and habits, and attachments, "the dear, familiar

forms" of home, are not without their efficacy on the intellect. This is sound philosophy, a reason, and a good one, why, in language as in love, I should be somewhat diffuse on such a subject.

The first air that I breathed was that of a retired village, within a hundred and eighty miles of the metropolis. This, I take it, was in my favor ; it told for something in the sum of my mental advantages. If I had been born and bred in a great town, where I could have amused myself all day with a succession of outward objects, I should have lived for those only. My spirit would have been always out of doors, gadding about, or gazing at the passers-by. As one sees in most town boys, I should have been "hackneyed in the ways of men" before my time, and so become callous, saucy, and impatient. The centrifugal force would have carried it with me ; all my faculties would have been flying to the surface ; my mind would have been perpetually in a ripple, but without any undercurrent. These are speculations, but not altogether of "thin air." They have the stamp of probability upon their substance.

I cannot take credit to myself from the lustre of my birthplace ; it is neither rich nor populous, nor picturesque ; although, as a Spanish writer, Gerundio, a worthy countryman of Cervantes, has said of his native town, "It might have been all this and much more, if it had pleased Providence to make it so." If it be not a paradise, it is from no lack of good-will on the part of its inhabitants. However, as it stands, there is nothing remarkable in it, so far as I know, unless it be the parish idiot, a being — so often do extremes meet ! — as impertunate, and shameless, and selfish, as a wit of the first water.

My birthplace was an old-fashioned manor-house of *the second or third rate*, just such a place as in these

trim architectural days would be regarded, by any other than an antiquarian eye, as nothing better than a large rambling farm-house, of somewhat venerable aspect. So it is ; the fashions of the time must pass away, but the early habits and associations of the heart are abiding things. I might live through a century of changes, I might inhabit a hundred palaces in succession, and yet all would seem cold to me and comfortless, compared with this home of my childhood, this dwelling-place of many generations. Would that I had acquired unto myself a name of renown upon the earth, that thou too mightest be celebrated among men, that my lustre might light upon thee, my nurse, my foster-mother. But, alas ! I am a dweller in obscurity. It is not of such children as myself that thy glory is to come. Be content, then, and abide thy time, till one of higher desert than myself, or of better fortune, shall arise to do thee honor.

It was in that old-fashioned, irregular, and somewhat picturesque mansion, that my spirit first took its tone, and my young life was imbued with its earliest, but still abiding color. I can fancy even now, as I felt then, while wandering about as a child from room to room, gazing up between vacancy and curiosity at each low ceiling, and wondering what might be meant by the fantastic variety of its mouldings ; or, it may be, contemplating with still more intense interest the carvings on the old wainscot-panels, the grotesque heads and figures, the combats of clubmen with wild beasts, the rampant goats and couchant unicorns, with divers other figures of created and uncreated things, set forth imperfectly at the best, though doubtless with the utmost skill of the old provincial craftsman. The spacious hall, too, the staircase, and the library, crowded each of them with old portraits, in antiquated costumes, were ever and anon the *scenes of my solitary musings* ; — provided always that

it were daylight,—for otherwise, when the “horror of great darkness fell upon me,” I could sooner have torn my eyes out than look up to them.

These pictures for a long time were things of mystery to me ; problems for my imagination ; a set of mutes in formal and fantastical attire, interposed between the living and the dead ; messengers from the material to the spiritual world ; mediators between ghosts and men. Were they dead, or sleeping, or watching, or what were they ? They were unlike all other people, they neither ate, nor laughed nor talked ; and yet, why should there be any difference ? Some of them, too, as long as I was in the room with them, seemed always to be watching me ;—what did they do that for ? Here was a strange perplexity, and one ever recurring to me. I was long in utter darkness ; then, a kind of twilight intelligence began to grow upon me, and at last resolved itself into light.

Not only this, but almost every thing at home was unlike what I was in the habit of seeing elsewhere. There was always a vague doubt upon my mind, though I wanted words to express it, and to ask a solution from my elders. I grew from day to day dreamy and musing, and delighted in nothing so much as in sauntering about after my morning lessons, looking into holes and corners, and searching and finding out, and gazing and wandering.

And then, too, there was the garden. O that delicious garden ! how I loved it. And no whit the less, nay, perchance something the more, for its quaintness, its uncouthness, its aspect of desolation, and most admired disorder. It was exactly what old Evelyn would have called a garden boscariesque, with oaks, elms, and all the trees of the forest growing over it at their proud pleasure. These overbearing invaders had usurped the soil, and dislodged the proper and original occupiers of it. *They frowned darkly and continually, till they had*

frowned Pomona from their presence. They had effectually suppressed the aspiring ambition of the fruit-trees, and taught them the virtue of humility. "Well, if you must needs grow," so they seemed to say, "why not sun yourselves in our shadow?" "Call you this a garden?" says the critic; "faith, then, from this time I must call every wilderness of bramble-bushes a paradise!" To be sure, acorns, and horse-chestnuts, and fir-cones, were in greater plenty there than pears and apples; the low, rascally little herb thrift was nowhere within the precincts. But still, be there ever so little fruit, the schoolboy is first served; and, for the better achievement of my marauding purposes, I could lie in ambush over every part of the garden as secretly and securely as though I had been in the Hercynian forest. And then there were yew-hedges, of "immemorial growth," and a fine chestnut avenue for the squirrels, and a sheet of water, and shrubberies, and orchards, and meadows, lying about in widespread prodigality, and ministering ample occasion to my untoward spirit, whether for mischief or meditation.

I was of no humor to forego the enjoyments thus provided for me; such self-denial in a child would be a rebellion against nature. Indeed, from the secluded life of my family, and their general circumstances, I had hardly any other pastimes than those created by myself in my lonely and restless wanderings. My father, though by vocation a professional man, was really, by taste and habit, neither more or less than a devoted man of letters, not one of your literary men of the present day, made up of pliancy, versatility, and general but superficial cleverness; adventurers ready for any thing and fit for nothing; men who think it the very perfection of authorship to be *au courant du jour* in all its frivolities and fashions; who compose, not from the fulness of their minds, but from

that of their flippancy and self-conceit ; writing, because they have not the patience to read, and making it the point of their ambition to be esteemed fine gentlemen rather than fine thinkers ; who give themselves as many airs as though they expected their books to be handled only in perfumed gloves ; and, from their silly affectation of becoming all things to all men, have done as much as in them lies to degrade the man of letters into the mere ape of fashion, — in short, literary Greeks ; the representatives of the old class of adventurers, so spiritedly portrayed by Juvenal. My father, truly, was another manner of man than these ; a being of a far higher and nobler order. He belonged rather to a class, now almost extinct, whose world was in their library ; a race, “un-teachable in worldly skill,” mere children in the art of pushing their fortunes ; and yet, as guardians of public morality and trainers of the public mind, at least as trustworthy as their successors, those harlequin successors, with whom “motley’s the only wear.” Such an one was my father. In the *morum dulce melos et agendi semita simplex*, in that single line is the sum of his life and disposition ; or, reader, if you like prose better, you have him here to the very reality of representation, in the short sketch of Pliny : *Scholasticus tantum est, quo genere hominum nihil est aut simplicius, aut sincerius, aut melius.* His fortune was a remarkable one. Born and bred up as the only son of his father, in a house of affluence, his health, wretchedly weak from his birth, and wasted by many organic infirmities, was sickened, perhaps, rather than corrected, by the tenderness of his home indulgences. The sports and exercises of boyhood were beyond the force, or, I should say, the feebleness of his frame ; and, in imbuing him with a profusion of nervous sensibility, nature seemed to have exhausted in him, as in many men of genius beside, the

fund that should have gone, in part, to supply the other physical faculties and force of manhood. He was debarred of all amusements else, and hence his love of books grew upon him gradually, till it occupied his whole mind. This original bias showed itself most strongly in every subsequent stage of my father's life. His love of literature was excessive. He existed for little else. If he had lived more after the example of men in his own station, he would have lived better and more happily. He might then have corrected in some degree the feebleness of his health, the painful defectiveness of his sight, the sensitiveness of his temper, and the consequent peculiarities, not merely of manner, but of mind also, and of a mind in other respects noble and generous, almost beyond the lot of humanity. As it was, the social advantages belonging to his circumstances were thrown away upon him. Neither the discipline of a public school, nor the indiscipline of the University, could work any great change upon his character ; and even the study of the law, that most drastic of all mental processes, and surest developer of confidence, decision, and readiness, was spent upon him in vain, and left him pretty nearly as it had found him.

He had enough, however, of industry and energy, as well as talent, for the mastery of any subject that he might undertake ; and in due time he became a lawyer, not merely in name, but by legal proficiency and right of conquest. He entered into practice under good auspices, and was successful for a time beyond the experience, or even the hopes, of most youthful aspirants. And that, too, despite the disadvantages of a weak and struggling voice, an extreme short-sightedness, and a person altogether, both in face and figure, singularly odd and diminutive. But, by some perverse dispensation, the *persecutions of his spirit, his delicacy, and high-mindedness,*

were bars in his career still more formidable than the hindrances of fleshly infirmity. These, indeed, from their very strangeness, might have contributed to his success, if his practice had once got into course and his reputation as a lawyer been signalized ; but his nature was too noble for his circumstances ; he could not exist in such elements as make up the moral atmosphere of our law-courts. Simulation and dissimulation, trickery and intrigue, with all the other habitual and indispensable arts of the advocate, were a very stench in his nostrils. He was not of those lawyers prefigured by the he-goat in the Bible, “ who cast down the truth to the ground, and practised, and prospered.” During his engagements in the low and noisome, but rich, fields of legal practice, he was continually panting for the higher and purer regions of literature ; and, as this latter taste has seduced many a young lawyer from his craft, even where his daily bread has depended upon his daily toil, it is no wonder that it should have wrought powerfully on my father, born as he was to an independent fortune. From deference to others he restrained his natural bent for a brief season ; but his father’s death brought him his emancipation ; he retired to his estate, abandoned the law, and surrendered himself to his learned leisure. For any other man in his circumstances this course was a natural, and could hardly have been called an imprudent, one ; but, with all his great and good qualities, he had, as the French say, one virtue too little, and that one was worldly prudence. This single default, like the absence of the one genius from the birthday festival in the fairy tale, was a source of disquietude to him through his whole after-life. No man, speculatively and in the abstract, was more judicious ; no man could have given better advice to such of his neighbours as might need it ; but his wisdom was *of the sort that is* too apt to break in the handling. He

was so full of the milk of kindness that he could never be persuaded to do justice to himself at the hazard of bringing loss on others. And this not from indolence or imbecility, but from the active benevolence of his soul, his truly apostolic spirit. He walked uprightly in conscience, but in the ways of the world he wanted something to uphold him. No one ever illustrated better the Italian proverb, *Tanto buon che val niente*. He lacked a mixture of worldliness, a dash of alloy to fit his pure gold for currency. His virtues were like noble traitors to him, and, by their treason, embarrassment came upon him like an armed man, and upreared its hateful head among the dreams of literature and the gorgeous visions of poetry.

Happily, he had the strength of mind to withdraw himself from society, where he could not live but to his ruin. Indeed, he sacrificed but little in yielding to the pressure of necessity, and retiring to his books and his scientific amusements. In the state of seclusion occasioned by this change I passed my early childhood ; and it was under that shade that my moral being, my mind, and my affections, grew up and expanded themselves.

My spirit, thus subject to retirement, and brought up under its shadow, could hardly fail to take from it a deep, if not a dark, hue. The shades predominated over the lights in my moral portraiture. The scenes where I was conversant, “where once my early childhood strayed,” were imaged on my soul, and reflected from the stillness of its surface. I have already said, that the character of my father’s house, its ancestral aspect, the solemn shade of its gardens, and wilderness of its grounds, had thrown over me something of that love for solitude, which, by the common consent of poets and of philosophers, is the nurse, if not the mother, of genius. If it be so, it is difficult to say how I missed the gift ; how it came to

pass that the wand of the enchanter was withholden from me. I must have blundered sadly, for never was child or man put more directly in the way. Solitude was my earliest schoolmistress. I had no society, no playmates, not a pony to ride, not a dog to tease for my amusement, not a living creature of my own to regard or fondle. I had never known any other kind of existence, or I must have sickened, I should have died daily under such a continual load of dulness. As it was, I had no standard of comparison ; I knew not my own wretchedness ; my ignorance was my bliss ; and though I saw nothing, and heard nothing, and did nothing new from one day to another, yet I pursued the even tenor of my way without disgust or restlessness. My mind, as the poet says of the dyer's hand, was subdued unto the color wherein it wrought ; my daily habits grew up into a second nature, a sort of moral regeneration. I went along with my course of life easily and complacently ; I became a willing saunterer ; a lover of groves and meadows, of sunny banks and secret thickets ; a curious birdnester ; a very Caliban for searching out crabs and wild strawberries ; a listener to the tinkle of the sheep-bell ; a gazer at the cattle in their pasture. This was my earliest education, and I have no reason to regret it. The ordinary nurture of the child is the corruption of the man. We are ruined, the most of us, spoiled to the heart's core, by being cradled, and swathed, and nursed up in the artifices of society, instead of being left a while to the freedom of our will, and our own proper yearnings and aspirations. We are taken perforce from the bosom of our kind mother, Nature, and put out to a dry nurse, — to the hard, hackneyed old hag, Worldly Custom. Hence, a wrong bias, a cravingness for ill food, a restlessness, a distortion, a *perversion*, a thorough depravity. Hence, to crown all, *an early manliness*, and by sure consequence a late

dwarfishness of mind. If the blossom be set, and the disposition be fixed oversoon, what have we for fruit but crabbedness, canker, and stuntedness? How shall the potter fashion forth a vessel of honor from the clay, if it be hardened ere it come to hand? It must be softened in indulgence before it can be strengthened for real service.

But I have not so learned my wisdom, be its measure what it may; I repeat it, I have not so learned it. As a child, almost as an infant, I went to school to nature; or, as it is expressed in a good line of a bad poem,

“The fields my study, nature was my book.”

I was imbued first of all with that mild, warm, and penetrating dye, and thenceforward I was prepared to receive through my whole texture kindly, and genially, the richest, and finest, and brightest colors, that the carefulness of choice could give me.

There is a soul in nature, wherewith our own spirits, if we commune with it early enough and long enough, must needs feel sympathy. Her soul should be the soul of us all, it should animate and pervade her children. This is the one source of feeling; a source springing out of the hardness of our hearts from the gentle touch of nature, the touch that is said, truly, to make the whole world kin. It is this source of feeling that enlarges itself further on into the full flow of beneficence, gladdening, restoring, and beautifying wherever it goes; till at last, when it has run its earthly course, it expands itself into devotion, it reposes in the fulness of the ocean, on the bosom of the Almighty. Disclose it, give it but its play, and, as far as its influence extends, earth is heavenly, and humanity wellnigh angelic; obstruct it, repel it, wither it, and all among us is barren from Dan to Beersheba. *If there be any thing lovely in mankind, it origi-*

nates here. Benevolence towards man, acquiescence in the will of God, all goodness, greatness, and true wisdom. A man so minded, one who considers himself not as an isolated individual, but as belonging to and constituting the universe, a "joint partaker" of the all-pervading soul, is above calamity. He can no more be afflicted by it, than he can feel his soul harrowed by a scratch on his little finger.

I have much reason to be thankful in this respect. I was not formed in the nursery. My feelings were suffered to expand themselves, before any great pains were taken to frame my intellect. I was a being not wholly factitious and artificial. I was neither stunted in my mental growth by the pressure of an eternal weight upon my head, nor pestered afterwards by playthings, and made to amuse myself traditionally. As a pedant might have said of me, I was very much neglected ; or, as a philosopher would construe it, I was happily left to nature for my development. This development began with me from the heart, from the first fountain, that is, of intellectual as of physical life. I wandered about at will ; I enjoyed myself in the shade and in the sunshine ; I mused, I fancied, I observed. I laid myself open to all the soft, and warm, and penetrating influences of nature ; I was subjected unto them ; I was softened, and ripened by them, in my feelings and in my affections. Like a fallow field, I was left to bask in the sun, exposed to "atmospherical predominance." The seed as yet was not sown within me, nor was it time that it should be ; but a better process was going on. Gradually, under this influence, the stiffness of my nature was corrected ; I lost my hard, lumpish quality. I was becoming, in heart and intellect, tender, kindly, and genial.

It must not, however, be supposed that these hours of *independence* were the sole constituents of my time ;

hours of independence I call them, for such they really were, and not of idleness, though the two are frequently, but most falsely, confounded. Whereas the truth is, they differ just so far, that there can be very little good in education without a certain degree of independence, and with idleness there can be nothing but evil. I had but little to fear from this latter mischief ; I had as much task-work as was good for me. My ethereal food, the ambrosia and nectar of my imagination, was varied by a plentiful admixture of sound, substantial diet ; to my stolen potions of sack, I had more than Falstaff's allowance of a half-penny worth of bread. I went through the spelling, and reading, and reciting drudgery, like other children ; and I liked it full as little as the generality of them. Indeed, my stomach was the more likely to rebel against such wholesome things, as its appetite for them had been somewhat spoiled, or rather its aversion heightened, by the indulgence of my fancy. Its stolen waters were sweet, and its bread eaten in secret, pleasant ; and of course the contrast of formality and compulsion was by no means to my taste. This, by the by, is very often the predicament of boys sensitive in temper, and of high nervous susceptibility ; their wits, perhaps, are gone wool-gathering, or they may be weaving what they have chanced to pick up in the light framework of their fancy. This is a good exercise ; but it is one that a pedagogue cannot witness, nor is he at all likely to be aware of it. The consequence is, that a creature of quick feelings, such as I then was, when dragged from the playground of his fancy into the teasing formalities of a schoolroom, would be found with all his faculties abroad ; and must appear to a dull man a very dull boy. This was frequently my case. If, indeed, things went to please me, and my confidence was in the ascendent, I got on like a *blaze of fire*. *But this sensitiveness, like a double-edged*

tool, was as likely to cut my fingers as to do my need effectually ; of this, I had full experience. In revenge, as the French say, for the facility of my happier moods, it would often come to pass, that if I blundered ever so little, if I stumbled even on a straw, I was unable to recover myself. The mechanism of my mind was impeded ; it ceased to act at all, or acted irregularly, and then the game was up with me. The trouble of my spirit, the shame and anguish of failure, were sure, in such a state of things, to make the matter worse ; from fermentation came confusion, my confusion soured itself into spite, and my spite degenerated at last into the dead, vapid sullenness of despair. Had I been with a vulgar schoolmaster, such a temper would have been the most horrible of all torments to me. Happily, I was in better guardianship. No Orbilius before my eyes ; no rod suspended over my head, worse, a thousand times, and more hateful, than the sword of Damocles. My Minerva was a kind mother ; I drew my learning from her lessons, as confidently as I had once drawn my nourishment from her bosom.

I shall spare my reader the details of my first apprenticeship. The pangs and labors of my tutoress, with all the circumstances of my birth into the world of letters, are not for the public eye. Like other children, I stumbled in the dark, and was confused by my first glimpses of light, and blundered, and despaired, and at last succeeded. To be sure, all this labor was well bestowed, it could not possibly have been better ; the thing was necessary to be done, but not to be described minutely, in the manner of its doing. *Fecisse juvat, facta referre pudet.* Here, at all events, I have no business with it ; I promised in my title-page a method of self-instruction, and to that mark and limit I must confine myself ; *operum fastigia spectantur, latent fundamenta.* Like physi-

ologists, then, and writers on the creation, I will take the elements for granted. Whatever others have done for me, I thank them for it most heartily ; but, with their leave, what I have done for myself is all that I intend primarily to set forth. This is not pride, but simple philosophy. Every man who has any authority in him is his own author. It is true in intellect as in genealogy,

“Quæ non fecimus ipse,
Vix ea nostra voco.”

But if any man desire the record, he may satisfy himself. Let him only think of his own sufferings through the whole of his alphabetical career, from its alpha even to its omega, and he will need no description from me of mine.

The burden then imposed upon me was no greater than I could bear even as a young child ; and not only bear it, but manage it, and play with it, and hold it up in triumph. It served merely as ballast for my sail. My discipline did not destroy me, as discipline too often does, in the way that a boy destroys his sapling, by heaping up a mound of earth all about it in the hope of nourishing and strengthening it ; no such oppression vexed me. I was never cramped by overlacing ; my heart beat freely, my learning lay light upon me, my feelings were never stifled by it ; the blessed air had access to them in a free current ; the spark was cheered up, it took hold and spread itself, and grew into flame, and warmed, and lighted, and gladdened all around it.

My roamingness was my ruling passion. I was never so well pleased as when I could halloo out and no one hear me ; as for my solitude, it no more occurred to me to complain of it, than if I had been a wild bird or beast, a young hare or squirrel. Had I been destined for a naturalist, had nature herself appointed me her historian, *I could not have been better disciplined for the*

office. Let me but go abroad, and I was at home every-where. Not a tree but lent me its shadow lovingly, for the sake of long acquaintance ; not a meadow but knew my footfall at the first pressure, and rose springingly to meet it ; not a hedge, but I knew it as familiarly as the blackbirds that were native there. Once at my favorite haunts, and I was conversant in them as among my own kind ; nothing was strange to me, nor I to them. The squirrels on the walnut-trees regarded me not ; they would play about the roots, and on the low branches, at my coming, and even to my going. The cattle would lie still and ruminate, with my shadow on their very faces. The sheep would lift up their heads and look at me, and feed on ; the very lambs fled not from before my face. The crows and wood-pigeons were as secure of me as though we had been dwellers together in para-dise. I was indeed of their familiars ; Nebuchadnezzar himself was not more addicted to the meadows. Instead of withdrawing myself from nature, as most children do, more and more every day, till they lose sight of her altogether, I abode with her long ; I looked up to her in my childishness ; I was reared in her presence ; cher-ished in the sunniness of her smiles, — in short, I was her late-weaned child. For years I had my sustenance at her bosom ; so did my infancy cheer, and comfort, and confirm itself ; and this by no fleeting influence. The spirit that was then my guest is now my inmate ; the warmth of my blood, the joy of my heart, the soul of my existence, to this hour.

As far as I now remember myself, my whole being was sympathy ; nothing in nature was indifferent to me. A nobler boast this, in the natural man, than the *homo sum, humani nihil*,* so vauntingly uttered by the player. Be-

* “ *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.* ” — Terence.

tween man and man there may be great cause of dissension, but between man and nature, never. No one who could quarrel with her, who could indulge a sullenness against her, could ever justify himself. But here we are in deep waters ; let those who list fathom them ; for myself, I would rather follow my own glancing little rill, my course of childhood. Nothing, then, was indifferent to me ; a flower, a butterfly, a gaudy little weed, was a thing of deeper interest to me than many a child is to its father. The instinct of attachment was always at work upon me. To satisfy it, I made myself playfellows of sticks and stones, and took here and there an ivy-mantled tree or two for my confidential friends. We used to go and visit them, I and my little sister, and call them our aunts, and uncles, and grandfathers, and greet them accordingly. We fancied, from all our hearts,—such is the potency of faith in children,—that there was a spirit in their leaves, waking up at our presence, and murmuring its complacency ; that, in short, they were well pleased to see us, though to talk with us would ill beseem their gravity. We had babbled each other into the belief, a belief of folly or philosophy, be it which it may ; for my part, for all that I have since learnt, I cannot better the conclusion. In fact, it was the mere doctrine of the dryads ; the poetry of the old superstition, exhausted at its original source by the pumping, and straining, and forcing of a set of racking pedants, gushed out from our young hearts freshly and overflowingly. So it is ; childishness is poetry, and poetry is childishness. The childishness, or, in other words, the tender, glowing simplicity of a high, and great, and comprehensive intellect ; the intellect of an Ulysses, who had wisdom enough to make his first home his last also ; who, having exhausted all his trials, and suffered much, and labored *much, and learned much,* and elevated himself much,

could not but feel at last that the whole was only vanity ; and, with all his knowledge, knew of nothing better than Ithaca, — his nursing-place, his mother, his very nature. And so with all great minds in general ; as they grow in strength and in intelligence, they are content to strip themselves of their lendings, to throw off all their artifices of habit, one by one, till they have reduced themselves at length to the simplicity of the child, the nakedness of nature. They see that all else is vanity and vexation ; that the only wisdom of man is to live after her rule, and by her example, and in her entire communion ; to expand himself, that is, into universal love, and so to blend himself with the Divinity, who is love indeed.

I disliked the drudgery of learning, not like children in general, because it puts an end to their sports, and checks their gamesomeness ; but because I could no longer wander about where I pleased, and revel in the enjoyment of nature. However, as my work was light, I was soon reconciled to it ; I even acquired a bias in its favor through mere accident ; an accident which I shall recount, as it shows the absurdity of the notion that children should be treated as mere machines ; that hints, and hopes, and promises are thrown away upon them, and that every appeal to their spirit is surely made in vain. The notion is not often avowed, but it is adopted into the practice of nine out of ten instructors.

There was a portrait in the house of some remote relative of my family ; a man, it seems, who had filled a legal appointment of some dignity. One day, as I was passing with a lady, the picture struck me. I asked her who he was. "O," she told me, "that is one of your great-uncles ; see what a great man he is, in his robes of office !" "And why," then I asked, "was he great, and how came he to be so ?" "Because he was fond of study, just as you should be. Look at all those

books by his side ; he was always reading, and reading, and reading, till he had learnt all that he wanted to know ; and so he became a great man ; and so may you, too, if you are only as fond of books as he was."

Nothing more was said ; the good lady supposed, doubtless, that her encouragement went to waste, that her admonition was thrown away upon the wind ; but it was not so. The seed fell on good ground, and brought forth fruit an hundred-fold. As soon as I was left alone, I began to think of what I had heard ; of the great man, and of his fine flowing robes, and his means of greatness. What a fine thing if I could mind my books, and be as great as he was. I thought that I would try it. Half a dozen times a day, as often as I saw the picture, it stirred my spirit. I took on, as the country people say, amazingly. I became zealous about my studies, and my zeal soon softened itself into pleasure.

This, probably, is an incident that would have passed from my mind, with its occasion, had it not been revived from time to time by the sight of the object that gave it birth. Hence, it is as fresh upon my memory as a dream of the past minute. I would give a good deal for that picture, if I had the chance of buying it ; it deserves my gratitude as fully as the image of any Roman saint can challenge the reverence of its votary, on the score of good thoughts and holy practice suggested by it.

My first essays towards knowledge had given me but little encouragement. As soon as I had mastered the alphabet, and had become a boy of letters, I was put at once — on what ? pictured primers, perhaps sentences about cocks and bulls, and so on, to little tales, suggesting all sorts of familiar sensible ideas, and objects of childish interest. No, forsooth, on none of all these things was I exercised ; but on devotional sentences, *precepts of piety, histories of early godliness, collects,*

epistles, and catechisms. Here I was completely out of my element ; all was strange to me as a world of spirits ; my reading was mere drudgery ; I had not the faintest notion of the end or object of it. This was, of course, well meant, but very indifferently judged, to say the least of it. The devotional tincture, instead of sweetening the edge of my physic-cup as a preparation for my childish palate, embittered it most nauseously. I knew not to what purpose I was learning ; nor, indeed, that I was learning at all, nor any thing about what I was doing. When I had contrived to puzzle out a sentence, no definite result was presented to me in the issue ; no palpable, apprehensible idea. My kind mother had forgotten, believe, that before goodness can be imparted the means of goodness must be secured to us. That a rich, deep dye can only be communicated through an indifferent, a colorless medium ; that it is in vain to plant a tree among a heap of dry, formal fagots, and so expect it to grow up. Mere materials will not do ; there must be an interest excited, a stimulus to the organ, otherwise there can be no digestion.

It was a mere accident, at last, that released me from my intellectual bondage ; that taught me to serve in the spirit, rather than according to the law. My father had a large library, — large, indisciplined, and oppressed with its own weight, like a barbarian army ; nine out of ten in the whole muster being non-effectives, and of no other use but to swell the catalogue. To me, however, all access to it was as strictly forbidden as though it had been a treasure of pearls and diamonds ; my presence there would have dismayed my father as much as that of a hog in one of his tulip-beds. This notwithstanding, one day when he was out on a long journey, and the household were all busy, and the door open, and every thing conspired to the safety of the enterprise, I seized the occa-

sion and stole in tremblingly. There was a great book there on the table, full of woodcuts, roughly but spiritedly executed, a Chronicle of English History. I opened it at random, and found to my astonishment that I could read it ; or, at least, that I could make out, between certainty and conjecture, the greater part of its sentences. I fell on my knees to the perusal with the earnestness of a devotee, and there I was, in a very few minutes, in the thick of murders, battles, and conspiracies. These, of all things, are most odious to the philosopher, but to the child they are inspiriting in like proportion ; there is nothing like them to warm his heart, and stir his spirit, and minister to his fancy. They are the motives of development, the earliest sparks of his intelligence.

“ He who would kindle up a mighty fire
Begins it with vile straws.”

This accident of the library was one of the characters of my life, deeply graven, clear, permanent, and, more than all, to strain the parallel a little further, ministering to intelligence. I remember my feelings at the time as clearly as I can see the writing now before me. I tried a few sentences, and, upon my successful despatch of them, I raised my eyes from the page, and looked about as if I had been transported in a dream, and just waked up again in a strange locality. Transported, indeed, I was, as well I might be, at the new world thus disclosed to my curiosity and enterprise. It seemed as if there were really some magic in words, though I had never been able to discover any in letters. But I could not trust myself to my feelings ; it might be a delusion after all ; I must repeat the trial, and I did so in fear and trembling, lest my joy should end in disappointment. I read through a page or two, as I should have devoured a piece of stolen cake, almost in a breath ; and straining *my sight as if I had seen a ghost at the images of*

slaughter, pillage, and other such atrocities, so delightful to a riotous imagination. It was the satisfaction of the wizard ; the lustful gloatingness over the treasures yielded up to my mastery, after centuries of entombment in this old volume. Here, then, was the sober certainty of my happiness ; I was satisfied ; I started on my feet, wrung my hands for joy, and finally, unable to contain myself, ran over the house and garden as if my veins had been filled with mercury.

But it may be said, that such sensibility as this could have arisen only from a privilege of temperament, a constitutional acuteness of nerve ; and, therefore, that the example is not pertinent to the mass, to men of coarse and common materials, made up for the wear and tear of life, for daily uniform drudgery, for the walk of the highway.

To this I can only say, that, if the fact be true, I admit the justice of the censure. But, indeed, no such peculiar mark was ever set upon me by nature. From the day of my birth, for years forward, there was nothing whatever about me to distinguish me from my kind. In short, I was as commonplace a child as could be taken from the foundling hospital. I had no pretension to stand apart, in the dignity of isolation, from my chubby-faced and rosy-cheeked coevals. But my circumstances, and consequently my habits, were somewhat strange, and thence the singularity of my character. I was debarred from the common sports and exercises of boyhood ; and however I might have felt the privation at the time, I have since lived to regard it as the chief blessing of my existence. Even now, in the maturity of my manhood, I look around me, and of the hundreds born in the same station as myself, many to better, and few to worse, prospects, there is scarce a man with whom I should be content to change places. In nine cases out of ten, they are a bur-

den upon society and upon themselves. Thirty years ago, they were of the country squirearchy, and never, from that time to this, have they got to be any thing more or better. It is true, they have had their enjoyments, such as they were ; they were mighty fox-hunters in their day, renowned perdricides ; and if the *summum bonum* of life could be found in field sports, and billiards, and such other pastimes as are said by Falstaff to suit a weak mind and a strong body, their cup would be continually overflowing, they would be anointed with the oil of gladness above their fellows. But, happily for the hopes of human improvement, happiness is not held out to mankind on any such conditions. Their pleasures have long since palled upon their palates, the enjoyment from without is faded away, like water colors in the sun, and that from within has failed from lack of culture to develope itself. Their mirth endured but for a moment, their laughter was as the crackling of fire among the thorns ; the froth of their flagon once dissipated, their wine settled upon its lees, and all the residue of their draught was stale, flat, and unprofitable.* Whereas, for myself, humble as I am in the world's estimation and in my own, I feel that, under Providence, I am in a great measure the master of my happiness ; and this I take to be the blessed result of early discipline. Instead of exhausting my animal spirits by excess of indulgence, I was led, not of my own pre-meditation, but by a good guidance that I knew not of, to temper and to subdue them. Instead of draining their source at an early day, I chose rather to protect it from the heat of passion by the shade of retirement and of literature. I might have snatched the flower, and flung it away to wither, when its brief fragrance was perished from it ; but, happily, I was better counselled. I fos-

* “*T is true on Lady Fortune's gentlest pad
They amble on, yet are they very sad.*”

tered and cherished it tenderly, waiting till it should ripen into fruit.

Here, then, was a delightful vicissitude for me. Over and above the recreations of my fancy, I had acquired the taste for reading, a taste, as David Hume assures us, of more worth than a patrimony of ten thousand a year. They relieved and set each other off most amiably ; I went from my books to my imaginations, and from my imaginations to my books, as if the two had been my only proper modes of being, the conditions of my life, and not merely of my enjoyment. In the lonely meadow, by the woodside, and along the rivulet's banks, I walked amid the wealth of nature, framing and reframing the images that I had found in reading, and revelling in the riches of my recollection. The stillness of those scenes had already sunk deep into my soul, and diffused through it the fulness of sensibility ; my fancy was afloat, and the slightest touch would move it. The remembrance of a tale of suffering, of a reproach from my parents, still more of a kind word from them, or an affectionate deed, would open the source within me, and dissolve me into tears, not of anguish, but of sensibility ; of sensibility seeking a thing to spend itself upon, and at last finding it.

This was a most auspicious alliance. Study and meditation are a creative couple ; the parents of the entire offspring of intellectual excellences. With such resources, and such a disposition, it will be supposed that my progress was a rapid one. So, indeed, it must be in every study, when the sense of drudgery has once given place to that of interest and delight. Happy is the student who feels himself to be in such a case. His perceptions are quickened, his faculties are high strung, he sees by glances rather than by research, he knows by *intuition more than by patient induction*. Such was then

the blessedness of my own condition ; and all from a happy venture, my transgression of the limits of my father's library, my taste of the forbidden fruits, not indeed of knowledge, but of fancy.

I remember well that Walter Scott, in one of his best novels, — Waverley, I think it is, — is very eloquent and very emphatic on this precise point ; on the effect, or, as he will have it, the grievous mischief, of letting a boy loose, to run riot in a library. The little fellow acquires, he is pleased to tell us, all kinds of wild and desultory habits. He must be expected, ever after, to be impatient of discipline, and enamoured, wilfully and frowardly enamoured, of his random reading. In general, there is no better judge of men and motives than this author; he is the familiar genius, the very confessor, of our nature. But here, as it seems to me, he has chosen to take his view perversely. I assert from my own observation, that nothing is so likely to qualify a boy for sober reading, and even for the severer studies, as a free indulgence of his appetite, while it is yet rank and undisciplined, in things of fancy. He should be sated with sweets, like a grocer's raw apprentice, till he has lost all yearningness for them. In the intellectual, as in the natural world, heat, or at least warmth, is the very soul of productivity. This warmth is latent in the child's mind, but it may be developed by the application of such substances as it can readily catch and fasten on. Such substances are plays, romances, and many other things, all of them mere frippery to the man ; whereas, if you set a boy down to a grave, serious book, or put him upon a train of abstract reasoning, as sure as he rises, it will be with no other impression on his mind than that of leaden weight, wearisomeness, and stupidity. If the good people who were about the author of Waverley in his childhood had *cramped him with the same restraints as he recommends*

for others, they would have got nothing by the process but a fool to plague them for their pains ; while the world would have lost — O, what would it not have lost ? — a spirit warmer, more penetrating, and more quickening, than any, with one exception, that has ever yet gladdened it.

But I must confess it, these chronicles of old Hollingshed, however amusing and inspiriting, were by no means edifying. It was no more than the record of the slaughterhouse ; blood, blood, blood. But philosophy is late, and depravity is early. Wonder becomes interest, and interest soon grows into attachment. I was heated, excited, and overjoyed ; led, in fact, into captivity, and carried beyond myself, by the images thus presented to me. Still there was a beneficial effect, a soul of goodness. The fire was kindled within me ; a fire, I admit, that might have spread to waste and destructiveness, if it had not been turned to profit ; happily, it was so turned, its mischief averted, and its good quality assured to me.

By accident, I suppose, rather than from any forethought of the effect, I was told one day to learn Gray's Elegy, as a piece of taskwork. This was my first acquaintance with poetry ; psalms, indeed, and hymns, I had learned in sufficient quantity, but they were no poetry for me ; they were formal, and refined, and sublimated, — they lacked sensible images, and therefore to the child they were a mere sounding emptiness. Devotion is the privilege of reason, and one very seldom indeed accorded to tenderness of years ; accordingly, I committed such lessons, not to the guardianship, but to the dungeons, of my memory, and there left them to perish wholly and irretrievably. But Gray is a real poet, and, as such, he got the entry of my heart ; for the heart is the very *temple of poetry*. The rural imagery that throws its *lights and shadows everywhere* over his Elegy, the soul

of natural tenderness pervading and animating it, were welcome to my feelings. I surrendered myself willingly and entirely ; I loved, and fondled, and cherished almost every line of it, as though it had been a living thing ; at each stanza, I offered the libation of my tears to the creative genius. If I had a favor to ask, it was generally, “ May I say the Elegy to you ? ” and so I was sufficiently rewarded. The influence came upon me like a heavy dew-fall upon the scorchedness of summer. It gave me a tenderer, and, at the same time, a truer tone. I fell back again into my vein of musingness and sympathy. I was like a lost child restored by a sudden chance to the bosom of its mother.

I believe that I can perfectly recollect my first recital of this Elegy ; and yet I have no positive assurance of it. Some dreams are so like real facts, as hardly to be distinguishable from them ; whence, as Wieland tells us, the belief in ghosts, especially at the distance of memory. And in childhood, above all, when the imagination is full, and experience but scanty, we are apt to cheat ourselves with a shadow instead of substance, to take the visions of the night for real occurrences. Still, I have a strong impression of this said recital ; — my mother, if I can trust it, as soon as I had delivered my memory of its charge, looked in my face, and, addressing me by my name, said to me in an agony of delight, “ Can this be you ? Why, really, you are quite a genius ? ” The address, whether real or imaginary, whether dreamt or actually come to pass, had a powerful influence on me. I did not, indeed, know the precise meaning of the word. I had read of geniuses in fairy tales, and could not suppose that my mother intended to say that I was one of that brotherhood ; but I had seen accounts also of great men, poets, warriors, and statesmen, and to many of *them* *genius* was imputed, always as a term of admiration.

The associations were all of a high and noble kind. I could not, therefore, but conclude that such a character marked me, like Beattie's Edwin, for "no vulgar boy." Reputations, like prophecies, are apt to work their own fulfilment. I found it so in this case, and afterwards at school and college. My memory was a ready and expeditious drudge to me, and this, in the eyes of children and of people who judged childishly, was enough to constitute me a genius. Genius is sensibility ; the quality, when stripped of its halo, and reduced to its real form and value, is no more than that. I believe, indeed, that, from my early habits, I owned more of this said sensibility than would have come to my distributive share. But this is no mighty thing to boast of. Sensibility, or, if you will, genius, is a gift ; and the word gift, in modern German, and, probably, in old English, means simply — poison. "Too often," as Hamlet says, "the phrase is german to the matter." This gift of genius is no better than a rank poison ; a corroder of itself, and corrupter of whatever else it touches, if it be not rightly managed and mastered.

But I am burying the text in the commentary. To be short, I owed my reputation to the folly of my valuers, rather than to my own wit. Still, I had got a reputation, and in that a sufficient motive for all my endeavours to make it good. I was anxious, as every one is in such a case, to be no less than my estimate. "Opinion," says the Italian proverb, "is mistress of the world," and the proverb is not far wrong ; if it be not the autocrat, it has no inconsiderable share of the joint sovereignty. I was uneasy in my idleness, ambitious in my designs, and eager in the execution of them ; and, of all this, the *ut pueris placeas* of Juvenal was the ruling principle. My reputation was ever before my eyes, a most delusive phantom, but, as imagination is always more powerful

than reality, so it was here also. I had no rest nor respite from it ; it haunted me like an evil conscience.

“ Urget enim dominus non lenis, et acres
Subjectat lasso stimulos, versatque negantem.”

Hence it is, in my opinion, that most great men have achieved their greatness. A skill in Greek, or Latin, or mathematics, is a small thing of itself, but if it gets a man the “bubble reputation,” the bladder, I should rather call it, that is to buoy him above water, it gets him the thing most needful, — *possunt quia posse videntur*. Intellectually as well as commercially, credit, even though it be based upon a shadow, may be the beginning of a mighty structure. “Get a character,” said a wealthy scoundrel to one of his less fortunate fellows, who asked him to point out some good money-making method. Get a reputation, I would say to a young aspirant, and then you will be likely to realize it.

I need not say that these happy indications were observed by my family ; observed with curiosity most microscopic, and magnified out of all knowledge ; and cherished, and laid up in their hearts, and repeated from mouth to mouth. My good mother watched over me as tenderly as — I had a similitude in my mind, but no comparison will do ; a mother’s tenderness is a thing incomparable, a quality alone in nature ; it can neither be likened nor illustrated by aught beside. She watched over me, then, as tenderly as a mother watches over her youngest child ; for such I was, and, as such, loved most dearly. The latest comer, the infant, while even yet suffused with the dawning blush of his birth, the “rosy-fingeredness” of the morn, is the favorite of the nursery, as the newest saint is of the calendar. By the by, nothing in my judgment so discredits the narrative of Tom Thumb, as the assertion of his historian, that the *little fellow was despised, and spurned, and hated by*

his parents. That he was the youngest, all records are unanimous ; and to infer thence that he was the smallest is an inference of no very violent improbability ; also, that he was the most quickwitted, tradition has delivered it, and his works testify it abundantly, and therefore my faith receives it. But that the eye of his parents was evil upon him, that the milk of their kindness was so turned to gall, is an averment contrary alike to the course of nature and of custom, and no history shall verify it to me.

By the by, how is it that this predilection should be of so wide prevalence ? that the affection of parents should so frequently fix its hold on the first and last links of their chain ; the two links that complete and bind together the whole domestic circle ; the Reuben and Benjamin of their offspring ? One can account for it in the case of the eldest born. The anxious expectation, the joy, the pride of motherhood, the bond of conjugal endearment,—the glow of all these feelings must survive, by long and long years, the event wherein it originated. But one would suppose, as the hand of custom hath the duller sense, that it must needs wax fainter, or I should rather say wane, on repetition ; that the cares of life, the thoughts of worldly want, and all the troubles and difficulties of parentage, would come trooping in to embitter their expectations, and deaden the emotions of their nature. But the truth belies the opinion ; and how so ? It may be, that the parental instinct is most lively in its workings where it has been most recently awakened ; that the child so lately born by the travail, and nursed in the arms, and nourished from the bosom, of its mother, is her own peculiarly ; that it claims and takes to itself, by the force of immediate relation, all the sincere milk of her *nature*. Or, it may be, as in the picture of life, the *gloomier coloring* is the truer one ; that we cling the more

earnestly to our latest hopes, from the recollection of our earlier disappointments, — trusting that we shall be comforted for the perverseness of those that have gone before by the dutousness of the after-comers ; setting hope against experience, the tenderness of the young herb against the dryness of the stubble. Or, haply, as the solicitude of a mother for her infant is shared by her children of older growth, her love may be cherished and confirmed by their sympathy. Or, again, to bring speculation to its close, the forethought of middle age may repose itself upon the child as the latest inmate of home, and the staff of declining years.

The fondness of a kind family, and my own readiness of memory, had subjected me to a plague now little known, but at that time most pestilent, — the plague of forced recitals. Most unwillingly did I lend myself to such absurdities. They were nothing less than martyrdom to the sensitiveness and shyness of my spirit. However, as the proverb says, “ though you may take a horse to the water, you cannot make him drink ” ; and, as I had no mind to be thus “ set up, not in mark but mockery,” I opposed myself, obstinately, to the process. I was compelled, indeed, to say my speeches, but I could never be brought to speak them. I took especial care to mar my good matter by my utterance of it ; to speak childishly as a child, even in “ sentences heroical.” The bold burst of Norval sounded as ridiculously from my mouth as a war-blast from a penny trumpet. The poor, old beggar-man, over and above his own proper infirmities, was made halt, and lame, and blind, and maimed into the bargain, by my enunciation of him. In short, in the academical phrase, if I was a poor scholar, I was a still poorer exhibitioner. I had a most especial dislike to be stirred up with the long pole. Like the lion, instead of *roaring out my part on such occasions, to the edification*

of all beholders, all that I did was to growl and groan inwardly at the infliction. Once, I remember a good lady, mawkishly literary, took it into her head, on my introduction after dinner, to profess the most prodigious interest about my poor little head and its furniture. Nothing would satisfy her but a specimen ; and accordingly I tattered some good poetry to rags, expressly for her gratification ; my office done, she gave me for my pains a world of praise, and, withal, cakes and cherries in profusion. But I was so annoyed at my constraint, and the ridiculous figure I had made in it, that not even this could conciliate me. I watched my time, and on pretence of reaching for something across her, I contrived to upset upon her parade dress a glassful of indelible Port wine. The sense of my own discomfiture and disgrace was at once lost in the dismay of such a catastrophe. Never was revenge sweeter, the more so, as this little piece of spite was attributed to pure accident. Still, my persecution went on, but my obstinacy kept pace with it ; and at last I got my release, as in a case of utter hopelessness. I was condemned most blessedly,—delivered from the torture of this my most “*damnable iteration.*”

It was a happy deliverance. These were pernicious trials, and they abode long with me in their effects. I bore the marks of my chain, its galling and scarring injuries, long after I had been released from it. The iron had sunk deep, the yoke had worn into my flesh ; the sense of shame, the consciousness of ridicule, were branded into my nature. I became a mere sensitive plant, shrinking and bashful beyond measure. It is true, that from my habits, my pursuits, and my entire disposition, I should, probably, have been shy at any rate ; but this violence against the grain, this dragging forth of my *owliness* into light, was sure to make me more so. *Hence a host of miseries, absurdity, vexation, self-*

despite, mortification, and pain, reserved for my after-life. And this was not the fault, but the perversion, of my nature. My teachers should have learnt better. They should have remembered the words of the prophet, to use no compulsion, but to carry their lambs in their arms, to lead them forward on their way gently and tenderly.

Still it was considered by my family that I had good gifts, far too good, in fact, to be wasted ; and so my father was called in aid, and I was put formally under his tuition. It was but a form, truly, and that a very shadowy and fleeting one. If ignorance be bliss, as some very good Christians have told us, and human learning only another name for sinful vanity, in that case, neither my happiness nor innocence could have been consigned to safer keeping ; to get the classics from my father being about as difficult a task as to learn religion from the preachers in unknown tongues. Nevertheless, we entered upon our course, if a series of stumbles could be so called. Even the acquaintance of such high dignities as *musa*, *dominus*, and *regnum* were no sufficient incitements to my ambition. Declining, conjugating, and flying to heaven were all one with me. The first fifty pages of my book were really, as well as nominally, a chapter of accidents to me. Indeed, my worthy father, though a ripe scholar and a most excellent man, was good for nothing as a teacher. He was busy about many things ; his spirits were continually in a flutter ; he had neither leisure, nor habit, tact, method, nor address for such a purpose. He was wise, even to a prodigy, in bookish wisdom, but of an irregular and undisciplined intellect. His attainments were great ; he was not without genius, but he had little or no talent ; no power, that is, of practice and execution. Many people fancy, that, if a *man would teach*, he need only be a scholar, and that a

very small amount of talent is ample for him. Whereas the very reverse is true ; where there is talent in the teacher, a little scholarship in conjunction with it is sufficient. He need only precede his pupil by a few steps, and with that advance, and his good sense and intelligence to boot, he is a good and effectual guide. On the contrary, scholarship without talent is darkness visible ; a mass of unintellective confusion, — a mere chaos.

There is no more fatal error in education than the prevalent one, that high talent in a teacher is not only useless, but likely to hinder his success ; such a doctrine is fit only to make blockheads, and to be insisted on by them. The acutest, and readiest, and most comprehensive intellects cannot be more fully tasked than in the communication of their knowledge to young people. Clearness of conception, variety of illustration, quickness, versatility, and complete mastery of the subject are nowhere more necessary. The task, indeed, is generally very ill executed ; and no wonder if it be so, when the conditions of its success are so many and so difficult. The only wonder is, that parents should be so besotted as to bestow their children, in the way they often do, to be instructed by blind guides, who have never, notwithstanding their self-love, been able to teach themselves what they profess, or should profess, to teach their pupils ; not merely words and dates and facts, but very things, and, above all, the use and exercise of their faculties. It is thus that an occupation, of all others the most important, and essentially the noblest, is degraded almost to contempt by the low repute of its professors, and the stupid indifference of parents. O, with what a burst of feeling could I cry out in poetry : —

“ Dii majorum umbris tenuem, et sine pondere terram,
Spirantesque crocos, et in urnâ perpetuum ver,
Qui præceptorem sancti voluere parentis
Esse loco.”

It is true that mere genius is unable by itself to do the work of instruction effectually ; other aids and appliances must be called in ; and in these, or some of them, my poor father was most sadly deficient. His train of learning, rich and ample as it was, was often rather an incumbrance to him than otherwise, as he stooped to lead me by the hand along the low level of my attainment. His knowledge was redundant everywhere, and running to waste from lack of a proper issue. He had neither the patience nor the art to teach me ; but, happily, he had the good sense to see that a different method must be tried. There was no chance for me but at school,—so they all said, and to the act forthwith. The correspondence was begun and ended, the arrangements made, the day fixed, the black death of my happiness doomed for me.

This was indeed death. For how else shall we depict the king of terrors, but by the idea of severance from all that we know and love, of banishment from sunshine, and familiarity, and enjoyment, to the “dark bourn,” the dim, undiscovered region, peopled by imps, and scourge-inflicting devils, where the ear is ever in perplexity with the words of a strange tongue, and the very breath we breathe is made up of sighs and groans and lamentations ? Poor little souls ! What can they have done to deserve such an intenseness of purgatory ? And, alas ! the suffering here is in direct proportion, not, as clemency would have it, to the strength, but, as the perverseness of cruelty orders it, to the weakness, of the sufferer. The wind is not tempered, nay, rather embittered, to the shorn lamb. The nursling, warm from its little nest, is consigned to the sympathies of the north-east ; to bleakness, discomfort, and desolation. There they were in their families, growing up, each at the foot of his own parents ; like saplings in a plantation, they

were drawn upwards under the protection of their elders. They were not galled by fetters, and cramped, and shackled with them, and yet compelled to work in them. They were breathing an atmosphere of gladness and benevolence. They were laughing and singing, and clapping their hands, like the teeming earth of Scripture, from the joy of their increase, the instinct of development within them. Lovely and pleasant to the sense, as trees in flower, and luxuriant in the richness of their promise, although their fruit was not yet. It is true, the warmth of nature, the heat of the blessed sun, is of no such continuing force as the furnace of a hot-house. A lesson or two might now and then be neglected ; they were, perhaps, a few months behindhand in their auxiliary verbs, the mysteries of syntax, and the stories of gods and goddesses ; but they could be without it and yet live. Such knowledge is not the essence either of morality or intelligence. In the mean time, for their compensation, they were living in hourly consciousness of the kind offices of their parents, and yearning to requite them. Their spirits rose warmly to their lips, and touched and hallowed them at their every kiss of gratitude. The heart, wherein are the issues of all good, was developing itself from day to day. At their own hearths, their domestic, cheerful firesides, they were ripening in their affections. In short, they were learning their humanities, not, indeed, in the academic sense, but in the natural and true one.

And now I want to know, why should we so envy them their paradise ? Why not see and suffer them, and rejoice in all their joy, and "entreat them kindly," leaving them for a brief season to live the life that they love best, as nature dictates it to them ; to learn less nominally and more really, and every thing whatsoever they *do learn*, genuinely and genially.

But no ; they must be sent to school, not merely as boys, — for, on the whole, I do not object to that, — but as young children ; custom wills it so, and reason cannot be heard in opposition. They must be “ disbranched from the maternal tree ” and packed with a crew of urchins as ignorant as themselves, and from their longer disuse of all kindly influences much more unfeeling, and therefore more incapable of real knowledge. The loutishness of the seasoned schoolboy makes the novice unconscious of his own beggarliness of mind ; he looks only to the general standard, and estimates himself by it. He is unambitious of any thing higher ; indifferent and reckless. For a few hours, perhaps, of the day he is under the immediate eye of his master ; but, all the while, or the greater part of it, he is in fear and trembling, — his mind feeding itself on the dry husks of grammar or arithmetic, and unable to expand itself with such food, and in such an atmosphere ; his remainder time he wears out as he best may, with his schoolfellows, from whom he can learn nothing except their habits of mockery, and selfishness, and callousness, or, in one odious word, of schoolboyishness. This is a flagrant shame. We do not sweeten gall by wormwood ; we know the impossibility, and eschew it. Neither do we labor vainly to fertilize gravel with sea-sand ; or to correct one poison with another. And so, if we acted consistently, we should cry out upon the absurdity of sending a child from home, from the society of his elders, where he may be best improved, to a common sink, where he will be worst corrupted ; where every pure, and fine, and generous quality that he may, possibly, have brought with him will be poisoned, sunk, and lost in the mass of feculence. It is Cowper, I think, who compares man, the natural man, to a plant or flower growing indigenous to the soil, *healthily, and cheerfully* ; and his urban, or suburban,

brother, the man of the multitude, the unit of the mob, to the same flower transferred from the genuineness of its bed, and bound up with others in a vase only to perish there, by the very contact, or say rather, the contagion. If this be said truly of the man, how much more wholly true is it of the young child. The child is indeed the flower, as the grown man is the fruit,— and the fruit may be laid on heap, and kept in store for usefulness,— but the flower? no,— never. The mind of gregarious man is cast in the mould, not so much of his society, as of his business, his profession, his occupation; each of these is an independent channel for him; he can look out for himself, he has both strength and foresight, he can walk in his own way, he is no laborer on the treadmill. But the very existence of the schoolboy, when he has done his lesson, is bound up indissolubly with that of his fellows; he takes their tone, he catches their manner, he is infected thoroughly with their spirit.

But then there is so much trouble saved, and children are apt to be so teasing and so importunate, and we do not like the responsibility; it is better that others should bear it, who make a business of it, and take it as a thing of course. As for the hardship of it, we have borne it in our time, and so must they. They will soon get over it, and think no more of it.

This is the common notion, and, undoubtedly, there is some truth in it. It may be some trouble to instruct children,— it must be so, if a parent is heartless enough so to regard it,— just as it is very troublesome, and very costly into the bargain, to feed a child, and clothe him, and bring him up. The more compendious course, and certainly the cheaper one, would be to starve him altogether; but then, how stands our account with our conscience?

I am confident, myself, that the reason why women

generally are so much better disposed than men, Desdemona-like, of so blest condition, is simply this. They are penetrated with the home spirit, they are imbued with all its influences ; as children, they live in communion with their elders and their betters, with people to whom they must necessarily look up as often as they observe them. The light breaks in upon them from on high, and, like the confined plant, they expand themselves, they grow towards it. Their spirit cleaveth not unto the dust. They are not compelled, for their own comfort, to conform themselves in mind and habit to a set of low-minded, low-lived imps, their forced associates ; or, even if they should go to school, as no daughter of mine ever shall, they lose something, indeed, by the change, in some cases, but incomparably less than their brothers. They live, in a great measure, domestically and familiarly. Their governesses are friends and companions to them. Their memory is not fed to plethora, while the heart is left to waste and perish. Intellectual culture does not proceed with them by mere watering without sunshine ; hence their superiority. Compare a boy of sixteen with his sister of the same age, and the chances are that she will seem almost angelic by the contrast. The one has all her native virtue, the raciness of her soil ; while the other savours but of the dunghill whither he was transplanted. Fah ! upon it. Truly there is a kind of sanctity about home, a natural, and not merely a rhetorical, alliance between the *arae* and *foci*.

Almost all men, I suspect, will think very much alike upon this point,—as many, that is, as think at all, and are above the vulgar cant of the happiness of childhood. For myself, I bless God that I drank off the bitterness of my cup at the brim, and not at the bottom. Those were my dark days, the foul, black spots of morass, that are hateful to me even in the retrospect, in the safe dis-

tance of my memory. My experiences as a child at school — mark me, I do not say as a schoolboy — I consider to be the greatest calamities of my life, — the greatest, I mean, in proportion to my power of bearing them ; that being none at all, or at most infinitesimally little. The word itself, calamity, comes it is said from a Latin word signifying a reed. And as such, indeed, it found me ; I was laid low by it, I was as completely prostrated as a reed is by a hurricane. As the Arabians say, “A weight that is nothing to the camel will crush the camel’s foal into the sand of the desert,” and so was I crushed in spirit. Wonderfully are we made, and we are changed almost as wonderfully. Steeled and strengthened in soul as I now am, I can take upon me to say that I could confront a file of muskets, or march up to the guillotine, and even to the gallows, with infinitely less of anguish than then possessed me when I was preparing to meet my schoolmaster. That was the real darkening of the spirit, the Scriptural darkness that could be felt. As my sand was running out, as the day of my departure drew nigh, I was as avaricious of each hour and minute, as unwilling to let it go, as any philosopher could wish me to be. Then, and then only, did I set my time at the right value, though not for the right reason. I weighed it as fine gold, —I counted it as pearls of price. The subject was an ill-omened one ; every body seemed to shun it, no one spoke of it in my presence, so that I flattered myself at first that I was wrong in my computation, that my number was not yet told out, that I had days in reserve. But every delusion had its term ; and mine was no distant one. Divers sinister presages betokened it, — first, there was the preparation of the plum-cake. I was a frequent visiter to the kitchen ; I used to be in the confidence of the cook, and, as I watched her manipulation of it, upon *the first hint* from her that it was for me only, and that

my sisters had no share in it, O, how my heart would sink within me, how loathingly my gorge heaved ; I would as lief, in the player's phrase, that she had stopped my mouth with ratsbane ! Here was the final certainty, the end of my self-deceit. The coming event cast its shadow over me, enveloping me in its darkness. I was afflicted with the demon of restlessness. By a natural compensation, a kind of antipathy between the mind and body, while the former is pondering and dwelling upon any hateful thing, the latter, as if anxious to escape from it, becomes wandering and unquiet ; instinct with locomotiveness, or in the legal phrase, probably one of Irish extraction, settled to shifting uses. Such, then, was my disposition, or, to speak more significantly, my distraction. I used to go about sobbing and sighing, eschewing all comfort as "hateful to my purposes," frequenting my old haunts, as one who takes leave of his children at the point of his execution, and feeling for inanimate things, trees, and such like, as though I knew that they felt for me too, and were grieving for my departure. Still, there would be nothing said, not a warning word ; but there was a bodingness in the very blank ; the silence seemed conscious of its occasion. A word is a light thing, but they knew that even a light word would be enough to overset me, and they forbore it.

At last came the end, ushered in by that most hateful preparation, the setting of my trunk in order, the abomination of packing up. This is an abiding horror. I have hardly ever since put a shirt or pair of stockings into a portmanteau, without a sense of soul-sickness, a tang of the old tar, a shadow of those most substantial grievances. But the leave-taking, the anguish and agony, the consignment, not of myself, but of my heartless, soulless carcass, an "unwilling weight of grief," into *the carriage, stupid, dead, and mournful as a coffin in a*

hearse ; my wretchedness, as I would be guessing the ever-varying proportions of my distance between home and school, between the cardinal points of my misery and happiness ; who shall tell all this according to the sorrowful reality of the tale ? better leave it untold, and let the curtain fall before the very close itself, — the catastrophe of the black tragedy. However, I was driven up to the school-door. I got out and entered, nobody with me ; society would have been a protraction of my suffering. I was left alone and delivered over to the persecutors.

CHAPTER II.

“ ‘T is far off,
And rather like a dream than an assurance
That my remembrance warrants.” — TEMPEST.

I PASSED my first period of probation in a village-school, but this was not long. My father, from some cause or other, probably from his love of literature and the variety of his occupations, had retained the freshness of his youthful feeling in advanced age, to a greater degree than any man that I ever yet knew. He was like the trees in Alcinous’s garden, full of flower and fruits at the same time. The seasons of spring and autumn, of summer and winter, had blended themselves kindly and congenially in his temperature. The impulses of early prejudice were as so many laws to him, and his affection for his own school being one of the strongest of them, of course he would hear of no other when there was a question of sending me out into the wide world. That he should have so long cherished this prepossession is only *one out of a thousand proofs* of his kind-heartedness ; for,

certainly, not a boy that ever breathed could be less fitted than he to bear up against the buffetings of a public school, or could have felt his helplessness there more cruelly. But this has been set forth already. Suffice it then to say, that, as soon as my childhood had matured itself into the boy, thither I was sent, that is, to the most fashionable of our public schools ; and there, for my first year or two, a precious time I had of it. There is a passage in Lucretius where a shipwrecked mariner, thrown ashore on some strange, savage coast, is compared to a forlorn little wretch of a child on the moment of its birth into our worldly cares and miseries. The force, and tenderness, and justness of the similitude have been cried up to the very top of the critics' voices ; it has been hailed and carried home to the heart with general acclamation. But as no one can pretend to say from his own recollection, that his sufferings were so cruelly severe at his birth into the world, and as every one for himself can bear witness that they were so at his regeneration into the schoolboy, I must hold that the latter condition has the better claim of the two to represent the distresses, and to be comforted with the sympathies, of the shipwrecked sailor. With this difference, that the sailor is sure of finding sympathy and relief somewhere or other ; whereas the schoolboy, though he should sorrow his heart out, would only make himself so much the more a laughing-stock to his fellows. There is a story in some old law-writer, Spelman, I think it is, — one of the few *loci amoeniores*, or, as I would call them, fountain-spots of feeling, that one finds in the sandy regions of law literature, — a story of his going up to London as a raw country lad at the mission of his widowed mother, *juris capessendi gratiâ* ; by the by, the word *gratiâ* must feel strangely awkward in the society of such an old beldame as the law ; but, however, the poor boy finds himself, as

he tells us, simply yet pathetically, left on a sudden in solitude ; and a solitude of all others the most awful to a forlorn stranger,—that of a vast city. And, after dwelling in terms that would move a millstone to tears on the miseries that encountered him at every turn, in the shape of law-French, surly-looking folios, and huge heaps of the tangled matter of jurisprudence,—visions these most strangely and wofully contrasted with the green fields and cheerful, copious rusticity of his own dear Norfolk, he brings us to the end of his recital by the touching averment of *excidit mihi, fateor animus*, and so on, in a full strain of lecturefugient reminiscence. His was a hard condition, I freely admit it, but thus much I will venture to say, that, if he could only have compared my miseries with his own, he would have hugged himself in thankfulness even in the midst of his desolation. I was like a boy who is turned out naked to shiver in the snow, from the enjoyment of nuts and wine, mirth and carols, a blazing wood-fire, and all the revelry of Christmas. I fancied, before I left my provincial schoolfellows, that I should be able to work my way and find my way, even if I were left alone in a desert ; in the slang phrase, I flattered myself that I was up to a thing or two ; but this delusive kind of complacency was not to last long. There is no place in the universe where one is sooner relieved of a superabundant cargo of self-conceit than one is at Eton. A day or two's experience taught me that my rustic accomplishments were by no means current coin among my new associates. With the simpletons of — I had been a personage, during the latter months of my abode with them, of some importance ; indeed, they had got a notion into their heads, how born or begotten there I know not, that I was a lord's son, a point whereon I was at no pains to disabuse their credulity. But here I *was in a new element*, a new world, and I felt that I had

yet to learn all the ways and means of it. I remember well, — would that I could forget it ! it is a very thorn in my memory, — that, a few days after my initiation, I took it into my head to turn sulky on being called upon to go through the process of answering the usual string of questions as to my name, tutor, dame, and divers other particulars. I turned sharply from my interrogator, and was in the act of going off. “Come here, Sir.” I went on, and paid no attention to the summons. “Do you hear me, Sir ? Come here.” Still I persisted in my contumacy, and held on my path, as one beyond all control save that of his good-will and pleasure. Presently, a short, quick step behind me, then a rough gripe by the collar ; hard upon that, such a twist and wrench as might have jerked every bone in my body out of its socket. I found myself screwed round so as to confront my captor. I looked up to him in an agony of fear and trembling, and there he was, his arm brandished against me, his fist clenched, and all the devil in his countenance. “Don’t you know, Sir, that I’m in the fifth form ? Do you mean to say that you wont fag for me ?” I meant nothing, I had no spirit either to mean or say any earthly thing, — no more than the criminal has when he is launched from the scaffold, and dangling at the rope’s end. “O, so you wont answer me ? take that, and that, and that, you little rascal ” ; suiting the action to the word, and both to his own fiendishness, by thrusting me each time with his fist violently against a brick wall. I have dreamed repeatedly since of being in this boy’s presence, and, if I had fancied that I was in the clutches of the devil, the dream would have been less horrible.

This little piece of brutality caused a revulsion in my feelings that I cannot well describe. As soon as my puny oppressor left me, I looked about me, as if I were *just then awaking, in the hope that all this could*

scarcely have passed in good earnest. What could it mean? How should it be? Was it possible that it could be my destiny, day by day, and year by year, to be thus harrowed, and rolled, and crumbled into dust. It shocked me all through, and confused my entire being, like a strong electric stroke, —

“Quale stordito e stupido aratore,
Poi ch’ è passato ‘l fulmine, si leva
Di La, dove l’ altissimo fragore
Presso agli uccisi buoi steso l’ aveva;
E mira,” &c.

It was just so that I felt. I crave pardon of the memory of Ariosto for debasing his noble imagery by its application to so poor a little wretch as I then was ; but the similitude is an exact one, and its exactness must be its excuse. When I began to draw my breath and recover my wits, the next question was, where should I go ? to whom should I apply for comfort ? Alas ! the word is as little known in the schoolboy’s as it is in the Frenchman’s vocabulary. I had but one chance of exhausting my misery, and of that I availed myself. I went to my little room, in my dame’s house, and there I wept bitterly. But my sorrow had no sanctuary, not even for its tears. I was very quickly interrupted by the presence of my comrade, — I give the word in its proper sense, that of a chamber-fellow, — a coarse, heartless boy, who could not understand why I should be in any concern about my thrashing now that it was all over, and I had no reason to think that another was in reserve for me. His notion, I take it, was, that a boy should be like a spaniel, as brisk and frolicsome as ever, the moment that its pain from the infliction of the lash is gone by. His feelings were but skin deep, and it was, perhaps, well for him *that they were so* ; but mine, alas ! were not so superficially seated. His questions and taunts, and, above all,

his blunt, contemptuous pity, were as odious to me as the flagrant indignity itself. He was adding gall to wormwood by every word that he uttered to me. I abhorred him as we abhor every thing that jars against our feelings, from the very necessity of its nature. If this sort of constraint had been imposed upon me for any considerable length of time, I should probably have either been fretted by it into satiety, or hardened into a callous, stupid, dogged indifference ; as it was, the solitude of the fields, and hedge-sides, and lonely places was still open to me, and thither again did I betake myself in this my second “oncome” of the antisocial spirit, as to a refuge from the flogging tyranny, the irksomeness of uncongenial companionship, and the “gairish eye” of impertinence.

I had a little classical dictionary at that time, and I have it still ; I would not exchange it for its weight in gold. Day after day, in the corn-fields, amongst the tangled thickets, by the river’s side, or wherever else I could hide myself, it was the companion of my wanderings. Schoolboys and schoolmasters have a strange phrase of “getting things by heart.” Why they should say this, when they mean nothing more than the hammering a lesson into the memory, I am at a loss to comprehend. This little book, however, I did really and *bond fide* get by heart,* in the proper as well as the popular sense ; I learnt it, that is, *con amore*, and it is the only book in the world of which I can say as much. There would I lie in ambush, resting first on one elbow, and then on another, till each in its turn became benumbed, and I all the while unconscious of it, as well I might be,

* This phrase might seem a corruption of the less vernacular getting by rote. Though, by the by, it is prevalent in French also. But may not this expression “*par cœur*” be also corrupted from *chœur*? “*apprendre pour chœur*” signifying to learn for choral purposes, or singing. The German “*auswendig*” is the truest.

seeing that my mind was *peregrè sine corpore*, on the heights of Olympus, in the society of gods and goddesses, among the heroes of the Iliad and Thebaid, in the very conflagration of the Punic or Trojan war ; or haply deep, ay, far beyond its depth, in the philosophy of the ancient sages. The effect of this upon my spirits was something prodigious ; changing, as quick as thought, and like a spark on gunpowder, the dark grain of my composition to a flash of fiery exultation.

But Nemesis was invariably at hand. Like all the other boys of my standing, I had a master at my dame's house, to whom I owed suit and service, under the regulations, or rather, perhaps, the common law, the usage immemorial, of the school. I said that I owed it, and this, indeed, I generally did, for, my habits being somewhat desultory, it was not often that I paid it. During the short days of the year, when the Englishman's only sunshine is by his fireside, I was charged with the office of keeping up my master's fire whenever he was away from his room. The charge certainly could not be said to be too heavy, even for my small calibre ; but the fire, nevertheless, was most feebly and irregularly sustained. I had but little of the patience and vigilance requisite for my vestal functions. The fact is, that, while I should have been there on the spot busying myself about the coals and cinders, I was afar off in the Dorney fields, revelling in the flashes of fiction, the wild stories of the classical dictionary ; I was kindling my imagination into a blaze, while my master's fire was languishing, declining, and dying for lack of my attendance ; I was cramming my own head with all sorts of inflammatory fuel, while nothing remained in his grate but a *caput mortuum* of dust and ashes. This was a grievous sin, and grievously indeed did I answer it. But, alas ! these delicious minutes *were dear to me*, every one of them, as a drop of my

heart's blood, and not for worlds would I have consented to their bereaval. Besides, my attendance at my dame's on the fitting time would have entailed sundry inconveniences upon me over and above the drudgery itself. I should have been brought to about the same condition as that of the unhappy wight who files a friendly bill in chancery, as he fondly imagines, good, easy man, for some specific purpose, for a matter of quick and certain despatch. Well, he appears among the wigs, he fancies that his errand is done, and would fain wend his way out again. But he finds to his most gaping horror that the whole court is full of certain invisible hooks. He turns round to disembarass himself from one, and straightway he is caught by another ; first the skirts of his coat, then his sleeves, then his trowsers, till ere long his very shirt is torn away from him ; and, like a gypsy, he escapes at last only because he is stripped naked, and so there is no further hold upon him. Or, again, I should have been like a debtor (the being next in the scale of misery to a chancery suitor), who is sure, when once within the prison-walls, to have one detainer upon another lodged against him, to bar all hopes of his enlargement. This, or something like it, must have been my own predicament in the rare contingency of my attendance on my duties as a fire-conservator. An idle man can always find — or, if not that, he can fancy — something to be done by others ; and so, if I had but once shown myself to the loungers who had authority over me, I should have been in requisition ten deep before I could have answered to my name. However, I was not then a lawyer, and therefore was far from coveting any such multiplicity of business ; as I could not take one without the others, I preferred, for convenience' sake, to waive them altogether, even at the penalty of having to confront the brow of my mas-

ter, as he stood there on my arrival before his extinct fire,—

“Black as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook his deadly fist.”

Then, of course, at that awful moment, there was an end of my flights and fancies. The runaway slave, the prison-breaker, the military deserter, when brought back to abide their penalty, have at least the strength of manhood, and often the recklessness of desperation, to support them in their trial. But I had no such comfort. I would have paid a handsome difference to have changed places with Ulysses in the Cyclops' den ; I had enjoyed my feast, and the time was now come to pay the reckoning from empty pockets, from a conscience void of all imaginable excuse. “Sir,” said the tavern-guest to his landlord, when in the like predicament, “I have had a capital dinner, and have not a sixpence to pay the bill ; but,” he added, presenting his person at the same time for the proposed castigation, “you are welcome to kick away as long as it may suit you.” I was far from volunteering for such a martyrdom, but I was not the less obliged, generally speaking, to submit to it. I was habitually kicked and cuffed, till I was as familiar with the fists of my chasteners as the child is with its mother's breast ; as callous against their impressions as the knob is to the knocker. But there is a limit to all things, a satiety, though a very late one, I must confess, even to boyish cruelty. They found that all their punishment had no other effect than that of pummelling my obstinacy yet further into me, of kneading it, as it were, into a still closer grain than before. And so, when their patience was worn out, the edge of their savageness fairly blunted, *they gave me up as a child of perdition, and left me to wander at my will, like a cur-dog in a market-town,* un-

claimed of any one, unfed, unsondled, ever roaming about in a sorry, scurvy kind of freedom, with no other notice taken than by an occasional stone flung at it, or cudgelling bestowed upon it, out of mere wantonness. I am not sure that I was any great gainer by the indulgence. It is true, that, being thus left at leisure hours to the guidance of my own humor, I was saved from the mark of the beast, the scarring, withering brand of vulgarity ; but I incurred, withal, the fearful risk of self-abandonment, recklessness, and utter reprobation. “ Give a dog a bad name, and then,” says the proverb, “ hang him ” ; it might have said, with as much point and justice, and then he will soon deserve it. My ramblings and scramblings, my bush-ranging propensities, my intimacy with all the hedges and ditches in the country thereabouts, were not, it will be supposed, very favorable either to the endurance or the respectability of my wardrobe, — of its contents I should have said, — forgive the vulgarism. I was in the habit of going about (the only complete habit that I used then to own) in such a dress, or undress, or no dress, as though the one business of my life had been to spoil my clothes and disgrace my tailor, — as if I had been born for no other purpose ; and, certainly, in this one I wanted nothing of absolute success. My hat, shoes, and each particular article of my raiment hung about me as though they were ashamed of themselves, and, in the words of Job, “ abhorred me,” — as if they were looking out to give me the slip in every miry way, and hedge, and gutter, in all the familiar haunts that I loved in my perverseness. This is the consequence of the liberty of public schools ; the consequence of a good thing, but an evil consequence. I became an outcast ; an object viler than the classical sea-weed, when its use was as yet unknown to farmers and mattress-stuffers. My *schoolfellow*s, who had yet the sense to see that there

was more in me than they could well make out, half wondered at me, and half despised me ; I became a skulker and backslider. In heart and spirit I drooped gradually to the level of my estimation. *Facilis desensus*, — moral degradation is easy even to the man ; but to the boy, without either foresight, or strength, or experience, it is rapid, headlong, and all but necessary. My disposition had been dragged through the dirt. Imagine a young chicken left to itself, in wet ground and weather, draggled, forlorn, and utterly discomfited. My spirit was like the flame of a candle burnt down into its socket, still, indeed, alight, and yet but precariously so ; sweltering in its own impurity and noisomeness, and on the point of being extinguished by them, it would flare up, from time to time, on any sudden provocation, and then relapse into subsidence. An outbreak or two of that kind I well remember, and I thank Heaven that I have no cause to remember it more painfully. A big bully was thrashing me unmercifully, for some real or pretended delinquency. He kept hammering at me, first with one fist and then another, as if determined to try how much he could effect towards driving me through the wainscot. There was a savage, gloating sort of triumph in his countenance, like that of a boy who has hunted a mouse into a corner, and is just aiming the stroke that he feels must necessarily demolish it. Suddenly, in his scuffling, he threw down a heap of papers from a table close by, and stooped to replace them. At that moment my eye glanced on a long, solid, clasped penknife, that was lying there, and the devil in a flash of lightning suggested its use to me. Before, I had been as passive as any lamb ; but the sight of such a ready instrument for glutting my vengeance seemed at once to turn my heart into a volcano. I got the knife into my grasp, and held it there between my body and *the wall, awaiting*, in the concentration of pure rage, the

instant of his returning to the exercise that he loved so dearly. Happily, I was disappointed, and he was saved. The papers required some arrangement, and, before he had expedited them, his humor had lost something of its heat, and ceased to boil over on me. Otherwise, it was but another touch of his hand, and he might probably have gone — whither, who shall say? — but to his account, at all events, and full, almost to bursting, of his brutality. It may be a question for casuists to determine the amount of guilt that I incurred by this conception. What it may be in the balance of other judgments of course I know not, but, for myself, I cannot say that it ever weighed very heavily upon my conscience.

This is fierce coloring, but not at all more so in representation than the purgatory itself was in reality. But the order of the ages at Eton is reversed, as far at least as the fagging system is concerned, and I believe in other points likewise. The iron era preceded the brass one, and the brass the silver. The *laudator temporis acti me pueri* will hardly be found among those who have watched and known, as I have done, the improvement of the later of these periods upon the former. As it exists at present, I would say, and I am heartily convinced, that the practice of fagging at Eton has much more of good in it than of mischief. Opinion there, as elsewhere, has established her supremacy over passion. The ruffian is no longer tolerated, even among the boys themselves, and much less by the higher authorities. Within the college walls particularly, where brutishness so long bore sway, it has submitted itself without even a passing struggle to the spirit of the times; though not before it had been made to feel severely and astoundingly the recoil of its own violence. However, the result is, that with all classes, collegers as well as *oppidans*, the master is much more of a guardian, and

much less of a slave-driver, than he used to be. The services now exacted are rather quickening to a boy's faculties than debasing to his spirit ; and are, moreover, fully required, in most cases, by the protection bestowed, and the control over morals and habits usually exercised by the superior boy, and that far more effectually than it possibly could be by the tutor. I say nothing of the levelling of ranks, the bereavement of the feathers of pride, and the reduction of nobility to nature ; these are trite topics, but they are much truer than those so much insisted upon by the denouncers of the very principle and abstract quality of fagging, however modified and mitigated. I speak advisedly when I say that it is an instrument of very especial use for improving the child into the boy, the puny nursling into the active and spirited lad. Hence the address, the readiness, the habits of accommodation, so characteristic of boys from public schools. These, as Sir Hugh says, are good gifts ; and, as I am not aware that they carry with them much that can detract from them, I shall give my vote for their maintenance, and that of their parent ; certain theoretical scruples, and, stronger still, personal reminiscences, notwithstanding.

I repeat it, then, I should do the school and its forced service a gross injustice, if I were to draw their portraiture merely from the suggestions of my own experience. In the first place, I had fallen on evil times ; and, again, I was myself a creature of excessive sensitiveness : my testimony, therefore, has nothing to do with the general practice, but only with its extreme cases. However, even as it was, I am convinced on the whole that the discipline did me good. Originally, as I have said, my feelings were highly acute, so much so, indeed, that they *would probably have become morbid had they been much indulged.* But indulged they were not ; their outbreaks,

on the contrary, were suppressed, and their extravagance confined within due limits. It is true there are some spirits — that of Cowper, for instance, when a boy at Westminster — so finely and so delicately tempered as to be unfit for such rough and tumultuary service. They would live the life of the partridge among the game-fowls. The perpetual jar and excitement would wear them out before they could be inured to it. In the turf phrase, “They cannot stand their training,” they would break down under the severity of the work. Such sensitiveness, then, as amounts absolutely to disease might probably be heightened at a place like Eton ; though I have known instances to the contrary even of that. Any thing short of it would be pretty sure to be corrected and reduced to a standard of moderation.

“ Well,” it may be said, “ you have given us an account of certain states of suffering and enjoyment, but there is nothing of all this transferable ; it begins and ends in yourself ; not a point of it is available for others. It may be quite true, but the truth is of a barren kind, signifying nothing, and pregnant with no good results.” I grant that this may be the case, that much of my story may be unimportant, if taken superficially ; but to those who read it aright, who ponder it to understanding, almost every page of it will convey a lesson. Even this latter portion of it, if it were duly estimated by parents, might often teach them hope, where, otherwise, they would sorrow in despair ; it might show them that strangeness, and irregularity, and self-willedness are not always proofs of incapacity, but often the reverse ; as it is in the heavenly bodies, so it may be on earth, that eccentricity is proportionate to the force of original impulse. But, above all, it might lead them, and others to whom they delegate their authority, to estimate as they ought the

high use and excellence of sympathy, of free and forward sympathy, towards all children. For we should never forget the susceptibility of young people, and that, in such moments of sympathy, the good disposition, the kindness, the intelligence of their adviser is blended with their own open hearts, "is mingled with them," as the poet says, "in affection," and cannot fail to communicate to them somewhat of beneficial and strengthening influence. Had I been thrown myself in the way of such a person, a tutor, a dame, an upper boy, how different would have been my condition! Instead of dwelling upon little vexations, signifying nothing, as any one of experience could have told me, what should I have done? I should have discharged the perilous stuff from my bosom; I should have taken sweet counsel; I should have read a lesson of comfort, hope, and assurance in the countenance of my friend; I should have been encouraged by his aid, and, in the fulness of my reliance, I should have gone on my way rejoicing. Lord Bacon has said, that "as the consciousness of his master's presence and protection is to a dog, so is that of God to a religious man"; it emboldens and elevates him, it steels the sinews of his mind, it sets him above petty pains, and fears, and miseries; it animates him to go on boldly and directly to his object. This is true, and a truth worthy of its author, both in the one case and in the other; nor is it less so in a third; in that, I mean, of the poor, forlorn schoolboy, who without such confidence must often make good in his own person the desolatory denunciation of Homer, that, "of all living creatures that breathe and crawl upon the earth's surface, the most wretched is man"; with it, on the contrary, he is a being buoyant with hope, joy, and animation. Like Shakspeare's quality of mercy,

"It droppeth like the gentle rain of heaven
Upon the ground beneath ; it is twice blest,—
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes" ;—

not twice, but a thousand times over, above almost any thing beside that I know of earthly blessedness. O, that I were once more a fifth-form boy at Eton ! *Oh mihi præteritos!* not that I might read more ravenously, or turn my verses more classically, or become a greater scholar ; but that I might suffer, ay, and invite, such little children to come unto me. A single year, let me but make the most of it, would be enough for me to compensate all my past misdeeds, by the present happiness, and future means of happiness, that I could bestow on those precious souls, — *Felices quibus usus adest !*

For myself, I was without this comfort. I shudder to think of it. I had to get on as I could, alone, and in all insecurity of footing ; walking circumspectly, but in the circumspection, not of carefulness, but of miserable uncertainty. Get on, however, I did, in spite of difficulties, somehow or other. Such is the force of nature, her promotive force, her forward yearningness, even into vacuity, where there is little or nothing for her to fasten and to grow upon. A mere boy, even if he were never taught at all, would always be learning something. It may be that he never looks into a book ; but still, the conversation that he hears, the stories that he listens to, the scenery of the wide world that is always moving before his eyes, must raise a host of ideas within him. Indeed, it is this very alacrity at learning, this constant influx of images into his mind, that precludes him from giving any thing out of it, that makes him so utterly inefficient for any work of active intelligence ; just as the banking clerk, who has more money forced upon his hands by a crowd of customers that he can well despatch, *cannot be paying away at the same time that he is so*

busy in receiving. The mind is a sort of lock ; as the waters are admitted, they should not be let off again at once, but gathered into a still, deep reservoir ; for deep it must be to be good for any thing, and, when the reservoir is sufficiently full, then is their time of service. Read what Hamlet says about "nature crescent," and how, "as this body waxes, the inward service of the mind and soul grows wide withal." The difference is, that, in these hard times, the body, for all purposes of its growth, must be fed from the home cupboard ; whereas Nature, *dædala rerum*, has provided materials for the mind, as richly, and lovingly, and gloriously, as in the age of gold she used to open her full, redundant breast to the physical cravings, the lazy, sucking propensities, of our then forefathers. But, unhappily, to fall back to my old metaphor, instead of using our reservoir of waters as we ought, when we have once got it full, we think there is nothing better to be done than to let them stagnate there. This is something preposterous ; a horrible, a most unnatural sin. It is presumable that Nature, when she set a limit to the growth of the body, intended the animal spirits from that time to run in a different channel, to take another function, now that they were discharged of their old one ; to minister, that is, to the mind.* She intended this, just as the gardener, when he stumps one branch, intends to throw its proper vigor, and juices, and "crescive faculty" into another. But we prefer — the vulgar of us that is — to stump the second branch also, the intended beneficiary ; that is, we cut down the mind, clay it over at the issue, and graft there certain shoots of folly, or fashion, or worldliness, as the case may be, to grow in the mind's stead ; and so there is an end of the poor mind. We seem to think of our higher faculties as

* "Nature is not finely touched,
But to fine issues." — Shakspeare.

the miser thinks of his money, that if we can only possess them that is the whole matter, and as to any further use of them, to-morrow will always be time enough. But this is not so. There is not a good thing that we have, except only devotion,—the highest point, the final issue of all virtues, the ocean where they all run, and lose their special names and qualities, and become the ocean,—there is not, I say, another faculty that is good for itself, or on its own account, or any otherwise, but for its uses. And the uses of the mind,—of reason, if you will,—what are they? and what do we make of them? *Quotusquisque est!* How few are they among us, who are not as good minds at thirty or thirty-five as at any time after! and yet these ages in mental progression should answer generally to the boyhood, or thereabouts, of the physical man. It follows, then, that reason, in strength and effectiveness, is but seldom advanced beyond its boyhood. The influences that should feed it are turned elsewhere, or dried up altogether; and in the result, as the Scripture says, “our strength is to sit still, and our spirit only to slumber.” The boy, indeed, must, as I said before, always be acquiring; it is a necessity of his nature; acquiring for the purpose of serving the man, but with the effect, alas! only of putting him to shame. And what then is the man’s process, his course of conduct, when at full age? In the first place, he is made, or rather becomes, callous against most ideas and impressions from without; indifferent, comparatively, to the advice of sense; and it was so designed that he should be; he has gathered his materials already from the external world, he has formed his understanding; * a lively apprehensiveness of outward things, in his case, would be importunate; but then, “so much the rather thou shine

* By *understanding* I mean habitual intelligence as distinct from *reason*, which I take to be reflective intelligence.

inward, light divine." Alas ! it shines but in a sepulchre ; it illustrates nothing but the "buried slothfulness" of its subject. The *assidue addiscens*, the *actum nihil est*, and *ex aliis aliud* are texts that lie dead within his memory. He has provided his instruments, and he thinks their best service is to be laid on a side shelf, where they will be out of harm's way. In other words, he has made up his complement of learning ; and now, he says, I will lie by from my studies, *explebo numerum, reddarque tenebris.* And so he resigns himself to habit, and lives just as it would have him. To be sure, there are reason and religion, good searching guides both of them, and never-failing ones ; but then they must be searched out themselves before their services can be had ; and, besides, their paths are strange and unfrequented. Whereas, habit is an accommodating fellow, always at hand, and sure to take you at once by a smooth road, where you may walk, if you please, with your eyes closed. And then, too, this same reason, to those unaccustomed to it, is a perplexing thing ; it is like a lantern held up to the eyes of a man coming out of a dark room ; instead of shining from within, as in the rational man, it is external, it is foreign to him. So far from showing him the way, it dazzles, it blinds him ; as Plato says, on no very dissimilar subject, "it makes him behave unseemly." And so long live habit, and the man remains a child to his dying day ; for the mind in every one of us is the man ; and the mind of such a man—in other words, the man himself—is nothing more than a collective habit ; and this same habit, what is it ? — The child of vulgar opinion, swayed at the will of the latter ; just as every other child is by its parent. And this is our grand, reasonable creature : reasonable ! — yes, undoubtedly ; for he has his capacities for it, to be sure !

easoning ! no, — he must yet be sent to school for cquirement.

ave said that the child, by its own proper faculties, rhaps instinct, is an acquisitive creature, and that y day, in spite of itself, it must necessarily grow knowing. This is a law of our being, and one that t be frustrated, and hardly even checked in its op-n. There is a tendency in nature to rectify results, is not a small obstacle that can make her fail of her dained purposes. The beggar's brat, half naked, tarved, put to necessity's sharp pinch instead of a r's fond caresses, from the hour of its birth, stunted ently for years by hard diet, cold, and exposure, up, nevertheless, for the most part, to the full, et, and powerful man. So also in the vegetable . The fir-tree, the shrub, and even the tender r will struggle up, and generally with fair success, st all the evil influences of the soil, aspect, and at here. And it is not likely that man, with his thou-shists and expedients, should be less able than other ires to make the best of his circumstances. If this e rule, certainly I was no exception to it. On the ary, from my temperament and early habits, I was ps more genially disposed towards learning than the er part of my fellows. In the first place I had a memory ; and for this I may take credit, without anity, inasmuch as it is received for truth that the ordinary development of this faculty is no proof of igh powers, and that a great memory is often found njunction with still greater dulness. But, at all s, I had capacity ; I had stowage enough for the of facts, and experiences, and fancies which it is usiness of that age to lay up. This was soon made est. Whenever a question was asked about the logies of the gods, or the names of Apollo's

horses, or Ulysses' nurse, or any other such matter as no good father should be ignorant of, when all the bench beside me was mute as a shadow, I was invariably ready with the answer ; I told off the tale as glibly and circumstantially as though I had read it from a printed book ; and much more so, indeed, than many of my comrades could have done even by that subsidiary process. More than once the master on duty has stared at me with as much astonishment as if I had been gifted on a sudden with a mythological tongue, "*pro hac vice.*" It was indeed a wonder to hear me for all those who were not aware of the secret of my necromancy. I have read somewhere, — Sir Francis Head, thou art the author, — that Dr. Lempriere by that same classical dictionary has made a trifle of some three thousand a year. If so, I humbly suggest that he is bound in honor to share the profits with my own particular self. For I take upon me solemnly to aver, that, if any body ever deserved to make a fortune by any such lucubrations, I am the man. Assuredly no one else ever labored at them, or got them up so thoroughly. However, by these manifestations of mine I got among my schoolfellows, by no very legitimate process of inference on their part, the name of a genius, — yes, of a genius ; albeit no one certainly ever earned it cheaper, or deserved it much less than I did ; but the fact is, that the cultivation of memory was the main thing with us. We were innocent as yet of perpetrations of our own in prose or verse ; and therefore the boy who could cram the most into his head, and in the shortest time, was the genius for our suffrages. Freely as it was accorded, I had no reason to rejoice in my designation. Few men have ever felt so severely the brand of a bad character as I did of this. As often as I failed in any thing, in the quantity or meaning of a *word*, or *blundered* in any other way, I was doubly and

trebly striped, — *dupliciter vexatus*, — against the form of the statute “in that case made and provided”; and why? because, forsooth, I knew very well that I could do better. This was exacting the talent with a vengeance; but it was certainly no great encouragement to my compeers to aim at the same distinction.

I should have said that all this time, while I was as familiar with the Greek and Roman heroes as if they had been my younger brothers, and could have chronicled all their acts to a year’s date, yet, in spite of this, or perhaps I should say in consequence of it, when I got out into the world and its ways I was no better than a simpleton. In learning and construing I had a general sort of perception of relations, analogies, and “fitnesses of things”; enough, though vague and dim, to keep me from running my head against any very enormous blunder; but for common purposes I had hardly wit enough to guard me against walking into a well. In the wisdom that lies upon the surface, the characters that those who run can read, I was a pitiable fool. Here in their turn was a triumph for the little wretches, who, though they could never come near me, I mean at that time of day, as scholars, yet, once in their own element, their proper mud, — the turbulence, I mean, of low worldly cares, — they were as merry and active while disporting themselves in it as so many little grigs or tadpoles. Physically, indeed, and in the flesh, I was sufficiently at home in this mud, as my garments, from head to foot, “stained with the variation of each soil,” bore woful witness; but intellectually I loved a higher region and purer air, too fine and rarefied for their breathing. With them it was the reverse, and I remember that I was grievously perplexed at the time, and am by no means satisfied even now, to think how it could be that I was so much above them in one respect, and below them in another. Put me to any

bookish subject, and I could make out causes and effects, precedents and consequences, tolerably well; but set me to do any thing in the way of handiwork, and those same little urchins, who could hardly, many of them, tell a verb from a substantive, though they had been bedunced upon it for a whole year, would laugh, and not impertinently either, at my loutishness. Surely there is something of a mystery in this. Perhaps my spirit, after its lonely communings, when thrown back into the glare of worldliness, required time to collect itself. And yet we read in Voltaire that there is no truth more certain than that the spirit of business and the real spirit of literature is one and the same; and so, on my own experience, I will avouch it,—at least, I never yet knew a man of high and sound literary talent who was not at the same time (barring physical infirmities) a man of worldly use, and what Milton calls daily wisdom. But then, to be sure, by the time of manhood the preparation has been completed, and the use is begun. Contemplation has done pruning her wings; whereas, until that time, the ready use of one's legs upon the ground is a better and more serviceable thing than a flapping, vacillating flight with unfeathered pinions, albeit through a higher region.

This is a subject that should be amplified. I pray you, my good reader, ten minutes' grace, and, by this watch and the faith of its master, not a second more. It is but a short space, and, if I do not employ it to good purpose, abjure me ever after.

Literature, to judge from its early history, should be a creature of the viviparous order. I use that last word but one passively; pity that I am not writing Greek, and then I could have accented it accordingly. Howbeit, as soon as it was out of the cradle it gave good proof of its stirring, active, expeditive nature. To pass over the *Hebrews*, though I might find precedents among

them sufficiently in point, we need no other evidence of the fact than is sounded in the names of the Greek classical authors. As to Homer, we are as much in the dark as the poor old man was himself; but take and weigh Hesiod and Pindar; Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles; Aristotle and Plato; Xenophon, Thucydides, Demosthenes, and almost every other man of literary mark. They were all, ay, each and every one of them, men of thoughts and words and actions, as well as letters. Contemplation with them was the soul, and not, as with us, the solvent, of action. *Tam Marte quam Mercurio* was the device charactered throughout their conduct. There is a sort of mystic quietism called by some religionists the state of ligature, wherein the spirit is abstracted from sense and absorbed in contemplative devotion. But the contemplation of those ancients was no such ligature to them as this. They deemed, and deemed wisely, too, that thought is but a candle under a bushel, unless it realize itself in action. They were "the choice and master spirits of their age," and demeaned themselves as being well conscious of it. Indeed, from the necessity of the times, it could scarcely well have been otherwise. Literature was then, as heraldry is now (O, what a fall is there!), the privilege of nobility. Its very name, liberalism, imports its estimation. A man of the commonalty would no more then have thought of sending his son to learn literature than a grocer's apprentice now-a-days would think of canvassing for a commission in the Guards, or secretaryship of legation. It was by this marked, but, as times were, hardly invidious peculiarity, that they maintained their birthright of exclusiveness in the self-appropriation of the high offices, civil, military, and religious. Their gentleness, as the poet has it, was their strong compulsion. The popular phrase of the time, *that men of letters* are double-sighted, was

scarcely an hyperbole ; whereas, if such men ever see double in our own day, the reinforcement is generally brought in by wine, or else by the mere haziness of their conceptions. So much for the Greeks. Literature with them was, what it should be, a good, active, far-sighted minister, instead of being, as it too often is now, a cramping and engrossing master. Accordingly, in their days, a literary owl was a *rara avis* ; a learned Theban as unfrequent an object as a Theban gate ; letters, in general, were the only characters by which a man could be written great.

Among the Romans another order of things had succeeded. They kept their course for a long time in the old laconic vein. The “*regere imperio populos*” was their one point, to the exclusion of all others. When learning, slow to come, at last appeared among them, it was but as a thief by night, conscious of its suspected character, and making its acquisitions stealthily by fits and snatches. It had its conversation among slaves. A man of letters generally, the *homme de lettres* of the French was in hardly better repute than the “*homo trium literarum*,” the mere fur, with those noble simplicitarians. But their stern old prejudices were at last melted away by the gradually advancing warmth of a more genial season. Cæsar, Cicero, and Sallust, and a host of distinguished contemporaries, appeared in league to vindicate learning to its proper social consideration. If things had continued so, if that level could have been kept up, the literary glories of Rome would infallibly have thrown even those of Athens into the shade. But the empire was established ; freedom, that very breath of intellectual greatness, was no more ; the public avenue to honor, that of oratorical power, was barred up ; and literature, thrust down from its palmy state, its high places, degenerated into a trade. Their historians generally, and poets,

too, were but poor spirits, — *animi nil magnæ laudis egentes*, — such tame creatures as are content to sing their lives out in a cage. But the people must be amused, and Augustus, therefore, with Louis the Fourteenth for his imitator, devised the trick of diverting them from treason by dint of theatres, poetry, and such other light auxiliaries. Then came the plague of plagues, — the most poisonous of pestilences, — the mercenary taint of hirelingship. The people had become readers ; the swinish multitude fashioned into a sort of sapient pighood. This taste was to be gratified ; books were in general request ; and authorship at last was sent to market. The Sosii arose, bad and treacherous allies for literature, — away with that hissing S, it is of bad augury for the success of my pun, — adventurers, mushroom men, begotten by neediness upon the dunghills, sprung up, and — *ex illo fluere*.

Then, with all allowance for the interval, — but centuries in the retrospect are but a span, — then came the Middle Ages. Literature by that time had been used up ; the poor, thin, ancient veins of ore were no longer worth the working ; and they had not the means either to discover or to bring to profit any fuller or richer ones. Besides, while the Huns and Vandals were uppermost, what hope could there be left for any thing but barbarism ? The flame was burned down ; but a few sparks remained among the embers, and these were gathered up by the monks, and taken to cheer their solitude. Literature, to tell the truth, in her monastic garb, showed somewhat too much of the antiquated virgin ; her surpassing loveliness had fallen into the past tense ; she was like the gaunt damsel introduced by the clown in Shakspeare, — “ A virgin of mine, an ’t please you, Sir, an ill-favored thing, but yet my own.” So it was. The monks had all the learning to themselves ; every thing of the kind extant was *their own*, and they took especial care to make the

most of their monopoly. However, they raised literature in some sort to a kind of dignity. They cleared it from the rust that it had contracted from its former solitude, indolence, and exclusiveness. They were clergy, lawyers, statesmen, and men of letters all at once. Of these four characters, the last mentioned might, perhaps, have lost something of its development by this forced conjunction ; but it gained no less in dignity and worldly importance. Everywhere, except in the field, these men were the arbiters of human actions, and laws, and destinies. It is strange, but nevertheless true, that learning, in proportion as it became monastic, as it lost utterly its real practical use, contrived somehow to acquire by those alliances and aids a factitious conventional power, more formidable, amidst the general ignorance, than it ever before possessed. Where we wonder we admire ; and where we admire in the dark we admire with fear and trembling. The black oxen of Hannibal, with burning faggots on their heads, no inapt image of an infuriated priesthood, actually, in the dead of night, put a whole Roman army to consternation and rout. This then was the cabalistic period of Learning, — she became a sort of witch, — dealing in dark phrases, denouncing, cursing, and overawing. Still, in the popular opinion, reverence was due to her. She was not contemptible, as in the former time, when she was bought and sold for vulgar merchandise. The mendicant scribbler and the learned book-ridden idiot were extinct from the catalogue of humanity.

At last the Reformation appeared, and the world, that sluggish, drowsy, gigantic brute, began to open, or half open, his eyes, to wink and blink at the new light that was breaking upon him. The art of printing had been invented, books were multiplied, and the plaything (for such with many it was) seemed so pleasant, as long *as it was new*, that almost every one that could read

would fain write also. The scribbling mania ran out into a hyperbole of madness. It seems, from contemporary accounts, that men were as commonly ruined in those times by printing, as they are now by gaming or hard and fast living. Such was the swarm of reptiles teemed out by the generation of this new sun of knowledge on the black, ancient, accumulated mud of lazy ignorance. Then were the battles royal of goose-quills ; and the inundation of ink shed a commentary, instead of cometary, deluge, such as had wellnigh overwhelmed the poor, conflicted ark of Christianity, the life-preserving volume of the Scriptures. People who knew by experience that they were good for nothing else took it into their heads that they must therefore be excellent at authorship. All that followed was of necessity. Like pike in an overstocked pond, they all ran to head. They were afflicted with a kind of dropsy of the brain ; while, as for their bodies, they were extenuated, from mere lack of food, to the subtlety of so many shotten herrings. It was then that authors became a distinct class, beings of no earthly use, and therefore we may hope, as the devil never chooses fools for his liegemen, destined, though certainly by no merits of their own, for a transition to heaven ; mere starvelings, fit for nothing but to be hung up as ancient anatomies in an apothecary's shop ; darkling, solitary spiders, busy always, to no purpose, in spinning their silly brains into cobwebs ; regarded by worldly men as idiots, by modish men as scarecrows, by the boys in the streets as laughingstocks, and by all people, of all kinds, as very poor creatures. So much for the blessed effect of the division of labor ; the principle that would go on contracting a man gradually, intellect as well as occupation, till it brought him to a pin's point. This, then, is the bathos of literature, — the period of its lowest abasement, — and this abasement it owed to its own jealous

spirit ; it would fain engross the whole man, and therefore, in the result, it got nothing but an idiot.

However, these poor wretches, as they were starved off and decayed, furnished a good top-dressing for the soil. Accordingly the plant of literature grew upwards. The grandees of the earth, now that their occupation as cut-throats was getting out of fashion, as their arms were taken from them, betook themselves, for want of something better, to the arts. Learning had not, as yet, been diffused into vulgarity ; books in general were undefiled by the thumb-marks of the beast, and nobles, therefore, occasionally condescended to learn their letters, and even to become candidates for literary distinction. Gradually the academy caught something of the spirit of these its new associates, and a mixture was brought about, a passing strange one as it would have appeared in the previous period, of urbanity with scholarship. The Muses began to think that it might be worth their while to cultivate an alliance with the Graces. They did so, and thereby, through the virtue of this loving fellowship, they waxed mightily, and extended their joint dominion far and wide, over kings, and princes, and nobles of the land. Authorship was allowed as an honorable augmentation to the shield of many quarterings. This was the golden age of literature, its culminating point of influence, and the date also of its decay. It was extended too rapidly and too far ; it lost its strength in its diffusion, — its substance became surface. Hence the “mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease,” and were read with great difficulty. For our Sidneys, and Sackvilles, and Raleighs, of old time, our Bacons and our Clarendons, were substituted a set of scribblers, who seemed to think, as Johnson said, that they were lords among the wits, whereas they were wits only among the lords ; fancying, belike, that at their *own good pleasure* they could take an *ad eundem* degree

from heraldry to literature. In such hands, the pen is a mere feather,—“a plume plucked from the wing of worldly vanity,”—and that vanity, nevertheless, is just as strong and as far-flying as ever she was before. In short, the feeling is trifled into a fashion,—a fashion that I hope to see pass away, and that right speedily. So much for literature, and now for my own progress.

I have said, that, with a host of disadvantages against me, fagging, and the fear of fagging, and the merciless inflictions arising from it, I continued on the whole to advance myself as a scholar and as an intelligent being. This was not from any original power, any force of native genius. Indeed, I know of no such thing; and, though not strictly an Helvetian, I am yet convinced, to make a new application of a very old fable, that the treasure, or ninety-nine parts of it in a hundred, is not in the soil itself, but in the digging, trenching, and manuring; in short, in the method of preparing it. At least, I am not conscious myself, nor have I the smallest reason to believe, that I brought any such treasure with me into the world as could serve to account for my early forwardness and proficiency. But, as I have said before, as soon as I had learnt my rudiments, and could make out a plain, easy child’s book, I had a wide range allowed me. My spirit was never tied by that most cruel of all Mezentian processes to the dead grammatical letter, the rules of prosody and syntax. I was not continually compelled, as many unhappy urchins are, to pore, and yawn, and scratch their heads with both hands over the collect for the day, or lessons from the Bible, or any such food for grown understandings as children can neither appreciate nor comprehend. On the contrary, I had free access to loose reading of all kinds, barring, of course, immorality. I luxuriated in fairy tales, and domestic tales, and romantic tales. *The consequence was, that I became instinct with*

the reading spirit. I was a genuine, intrinsic book-fancier. I loved them for their own sakes, instead of hating them, as most boys do, for the sake of the compulsion and heart-sickness associated with them. On the whole, then, I was endowed, as a preparation for my work, with what Cicero calls the *subactum ingenium*, — “*Subactio autem est*,” to use his own words, “*usus, auditio, lectio, literæ*.” The expression is a metaphor taken from the preparation of the soil ; and, if I may presume to take it from his hands, and carry it on, I would say that, in a soil so genially warmed and enriched as mine had then been, any chance seeds that might be thrown there could hardly fail to take root and prosper. Besides, I had become, as it were, privy to the atmosphere of literature, — I was familiar with the medium through which these things were to be viewed, and marked, and estimated ; whereas, in most cases, it is the want of this pervading sense that constitutes the mental darkness of children, and of all aspirants after knowledge while in their noviciate, that reduces them to the condition of mere gropers after truth. For lack of familiarity they are struck by the sight of individual things, their mind is arrested by them, and they look not to what imports us principally, — relations. The things that we can see through will often serve us as glasses to discern other things, — they will bring within our range such distant and obscure objects as otherwise would escape our sight altogether. Such was my happy predicament. My general habit was a lucid medium, — a permanent force applicable to all kinds of occasions, as they might happen. It enabled me to use what I did know for the discovery of what I did not ; just as the general notions of the physician enable him to prescribe more effectually than the mere layman for any new and strange disorder, although utterly unknown to his experience. The effects *here stated*, together with their causes, and the observa-

tions arising upon them, I commend to the very especial notice of all parents and tutors.

There is an advantage belonging to schools, which, in my own case, as a boy and not as a child, made amends in a great measure for the incongeniality of their discipline,— I mean the regularity of their periods and observances. Had I remained at home, framed and habituated as I was, I should probably have grown out, by the free indulgence of my fancies, into the dreaming, rambling, impracticable idler. There would have been the press of my father's occupations,— the interruption of a chance visiter,— the anxiety of my mother to take me out in the carriage for the air's sake, as often as it suited her to use it,— and then my own indisposition,— O, the convenience of the word! the never-failing jugglery of its double meaning! — besides the difficulty of screwing up my faculties to meet as an instructer one with whom I was living laxly, as with an affectionate parent; and, even if there were none of all these, yet there must have been more than all,— the importunate distractions of fancy, busy upon a thousand little objects of home-interest here, there, and everywhere around her, while she is withholden from the enjoyment of them by the stern necessities of study. But in schools, and in public schools particularly, there is no such puniness as this. There the statement of hours and observances, and their rigorous enforcement, are of the same service to the entire school system as the hem is to the garment. They prevent it from unravelling and falling to pieces. Reader, I know that I have your applause for the happiness of this illustration. Feel it you must, if you can feel any thing, or appreciate any thing; but my mind misgives me as to its parentage,— I fear that it is none of mine. Admirable as it is, I cannot conscientiously take credit for it;— *of its real origin* I can say nothing. It

is a denizen of my own mind, if not a natural-born subject of it. Still I cannot but allow my suspicions that its emergence is from the depths of memory, and not from those of thought. Indeed, this is no unusual matter, for between the two there is a certain, though profound and secret, communication. Thought and memory are the Alpheus and Arethusa of metaphysics. Commit any material to the latter, and it may chance, that, after a long interval of forgetfulness, by some dark, mysterious, subterranean transition, it will appear floating at its ease on the surface of the former, as though it had been thrown up from no other sources than those of pure, proper invention. But this is a digression.

It will be supposed, from what I have said, that my library in those days was not likely to be in better preservation than my wardrobe. I cannot gainsay the supposition ; indeed, it would have seemed, from my practice, that the "*liber mihi non erit usquam*" of Horace was my standing rule upon the subject,—a vow solemnly made by me, and kept as solemnly. It is true that I loved and cherished my books ; but as the things that we most affect are often the least prone to return our affection, so, with true female perversity, they were for ever — that is, while they lasted, — a brief eternity — falling away from me. And yet I renewed them, —no, that is inaccurate, — they were never long enough with me to grow old, — but, however, I bought them afresh every coming school-time, as the emptiness of my purse when it should have been fullest, when it should have balanced the dead weight of my heart upon my return, did most droopingly testify. For a day or two they would seem sufficiently contented in my custody ; but, as time went on, like the passengers over Mirza's bridge, they would be dropping off one by one most strangely and unaccountably, until at last I was left alone, naked

as Lear, unaccommodated, stripped of my literary lendings, and altogether bookrupt. Lucky that my father had never destined me to trade, for book-keeping to me, I suppose from some planetary predominance, was a thing impossible. I remember that the good man used to write to me before the holydays, enjoining me especially to bring home my school-books, in order that he might compare my scholarship with his fond hopes ; but my return to the writ was invariably one and the same, "*Nulla bona*," — and this was true as truth itself, though it was never taken by him for any thing else but an audacious falsehood. There was one exception, — an Abdiel that remained with me to the last, — a true pearl of faith, — a beggar's dog, — my own dear classical dictionary. It had indeed no wings wherewithal to fly from me, for it was divested, poor thing ! of both covers, and was otherwise as sorely treated as a boy's favorite will generally be. The said covers had been converted into candlesticks by a legerdemain only understood at Eton, — a goodly process and a praiseworthy, — whereby the outward integuments are often made to minister to enlightenment more effectually than even the inward spirit of the book. It was a small volume this classical dictionary, but to me it was a host, — ay, and my whole host too. It was a thing of most "changeful potency," — it might have matched poor Matthews himself in the variety of its personifications, — Ovid, Terence, Eutropius, and the other classics of the third form, — there was not a worthy of them all that it was not required to represent as regularly as their turn came round, and this without even the poor pretext of a disguise, — stripped as it was, — coverless and self-evident, — it was put forward in the same sort of forlorn hope as Scrub the joiner, when he comes forth to beg the favor of the audience that *they will be so good as to take him for the lion*.

Unhappily, the metamorphosis was seldom as perfect as the intention would have made it. There, however, would I sit, at school-hours, like one of Rembrandt's philosophers pondering a problem, poring over the selfsame point of the selfsame page, till my eyes — unless that they were of the lacklustre quality — must infallibly, like sun-glasses, have burnt a hole in it ; and so I hoped that if I could only sit thus without breathing a breath audibly, or stirring a muscle visibly, I might escape the observation of the master. But, alas ! the studious fix-edness of a boy is a strange thing, — a phenomenon against the course of blood, — and therefore much more remarkable than any, the most mercurial, restlessness. I found the proof of it ; my intenseness, — or rather, to shorten the sentence, and kill two meanings with one word, — my intention, was but too evident. After a short pause, during which I sat lowering and shrinking into myself, like a partridge awaiting the hawk's pounce, — “ Pray, what book have you got there ? ” No name, perhaps, was named ; but I knew that the question could be intended for none but me. It struck me with a sudden slight quivering, like that of a man shot through the head, and dead as it were by anticipation, before the death-stroke has time to affect him otherwise than by just rippling the surface of his sensations. Not a word of answer, not so much as a motion of the head, but only an “ unquiet raising of the eye ” towards the inquirer, as if to deprecate the necessity of confession. Happily some malicious little wretch of my familiar foes would make a movement as if to take the book from me, and hand it on for inspection, grinning all the while with an impish but half-suppressed leer of triumph. “ O, no, you need not send it here ; I see what it is ; the old story ; well, we shall find out in time which of the two will be tired *first*, — *you* of being flogged, or *I* of complaining of *you*.

Put him in the bill." I might have got up and said, " Well, Sir, but I can construe the lesson for all that, and it was for nothing else that I came here." Had I made such an averment, I could have verified it nine times out of ten, and the master, in the presumption that he was a man also, could hardly have resisted the appeal ; but my spirit never rose to such a height, — it was too magnanimous an effort, — and so I was put in the bill, and consigned duly to the torturer. This said bill, it should be known, was a long, thin, white strip of paper, like a bridal favor, or rather in our case like a child's mourning favor, bearing the names of culprits under sentence of the extreme penalty of the law. I was indeed an infinitive thing on that score. It could never have been allowed as a true bill, it would have been ignored to a certainty, unless my name had appeared there to authenticate it ; and so the block and my knees for a series of some years were most familiarly acquainted. Had I practised genuflection for purposes of prayer as assiduously as I did for those of vapulation, of a surety I had been the greatest devotee extant. Had I lived in a Roman Catholic country, I must have been canonized for a saint. I have heard, and indeed seen, that in some Papist cathedrals the stone steps before the images are worn absolutely down by the knees of their votaries ; and the hard oaken block itself must have felt, I guess, the same sort of contrition at my frequent and painful submissions to it.

But to speak seriously, the continuance of this same practice is a slur upon the fair fame of Eton. It is a speck on the diamond, — ay, and I fear more than that, — a spot, a flaw, — but at worst only a superficial one, and of no very difficult riddance ; clear but that away, and how bright is the effulgence, — how incalculably enhanced is the estimation ! In plain words, such a *punishment as this is a moral degradation*, both to the

inflictor and to the patient ; and if, in fact, it should not always so operate, it is only because the moral sense itself is abased and deadened by the frequency, the familiarity, of the infliction :—

“The spirit is subdued
To that it lives in,—like the dyer’s hand.”

I need not waste words to prove that mutual respect between tutor and pupil—or reverence, as the poet would have it,—you may choose which term you will—is the only pure, proper medium of tuition. This feeling is trampled into dirt by the hateful brutality, and so are all its agents and auxiliaries, mutual confidence, kindness, and expansiveness of heart ; to receive lessons of wisdom from the minister of our degradation, the ordainer and witness of our beastly exposure, what is it but to take our spiritual comfort from our hangman, or our holy water from our ordinary vessel of dishonor ? True, it is effectual for some purposes,—and that is the worst feature of it ; if it were not for that, it must have been abolished by consent before a voice could have been raised against it. It saves trouble, and may suppress some slight disorders, only perhaps to drive them back upon the heart ; but, be its good effects what they may, they are lost completely in the hideous blackness of the pervading, pestilent evil,—they are the good effects of a plague-sore, regarded merely as an issue. Tell me not of difficulties,—they have been surmounted, and always may be so, even in common schools, where the feelings are less delicate, the spirit less generous, the sense of shame and honor less prevalent, and the success therefore of the experiment beyond all comparison less easy ; but, though there were not an example extant, it would be only the more becoming to the preëminence of Eton to create one for herself, to challenge the glory of *the exception*, and to erect herself, as in other things

so in this, into a standard for imitation. Exhaust all other expedients, and then it will be time to talk of impossibilities. But remember,— *Cuncta prius tentanda*.

I believe that in this respect I was more fortunate than my fellows, or the greater part of them. I was not scourged, as culprits both at school and Newgate often are, from laxity into depravity of principle, — from the occasional practice into the thorough habit of delinquency. My conversation with works of high-flown fancy, the eager delight wherewith I used to slake my soul from the sources of fiction, had raised it to something of a high tone, — had given it a dash of chivalry, — which otherwise, probably, would never have belonged to it. Observe, I prithee, good reader, that I speak thus freely of myself here and elsewhere, as holding that in a work of this kind, devoted to the encouragement of others, any affectation of modesty would be a thing more detestable than even the exhibition of sheer vanity ; the one, by exaggerating its achievements, might inspirit many a poor, fainting soul ; while the other can do nothing but mystify, perplex, and dishearten, where its office is to show a clear, light, and cheerful countenance. The avowal is made but once, but it should be borne in mind constantly, whenever these volumes are in hand.

I said, that, by the grace of God, I was enabled to preserve something of a good spirit through all trials and temptations. I will give a specimen of it. About a year from my entrance at Eton, perhaps a year and a half, I had to try my hand, ay, and my head too, though this the utilitarians deny, at writing nonsense verses, that is, at putting words into rhythm, without any regard to meaning, — the result being a mere tesselated pavement, — composition without story, — or, as the old poet has it : —

*“Lepide lexes compostæ ut tesserulae omnes
Arte pavimenti, atque emblemata vermiculato.”*

In general, to write nonsense is no great difficulty with any of us ; but to write it thus, according to rule and the dire necessities of verse, was not so easy a matter, at least to our raw intelligences. The remembrance of these distresses often tempts me to believe that Plato may be right, after all, where he affirms that all our knowledge is merely the soul's recollection of what it had acquired in a former state ; for myself, I can as easily believe this solution as understand how else a child could make out matters of such difficulty as they do somehow contrive to expedite. However, I have no business just now with such deep philosophy. My story is, that one evening when in dire perplexity, my good genius having played me truant and I being utterly incapable of reducing my contumacious syllables to order, the thought suddenly struck me, that, though I could do nothing myself, I might avail myself of what had been done by others ; and so, on the principle of the broom-stealer, who contented himself, when put on his defence at Bow Street, with the simple statement that he had stolen the brooms because it was easier to steal them ready made than to make them, I scratched out my own abortions and set down in their stead three very clever verses of Ovid, that happened to be laid up by me in ordinary. I took them up to the master with as much briskness and boldness, to all appearance, as I should have done a copy of prize verses. Of course a single glance at them was enough. “Are these your own ?” “Yes, Sir.” “Are they, indeed ? pray when did Ovid give them to you ?” “O, Sir, I made them myself.” “Then you are astonishingly improved ; but let me see how you contrive to make them,—just show me the words in the page I gave you ?” I might as well have pretended, as Hardouin *the Jesuit* did a century before, to find half the doctrines of Christianity set forth in adumbration there ; this I

knew right surely ; however, I opened the page, and pored over it a minute or so to no purpose. The master, it seems, was a man of high principle and feeling,—I judge so, at least, from his behaviour at that time. He gave me credit probably for something of a good disposition, and was unwilling to poison it by cramming my flagrant lie down my throat, and making me ashamed of myself. He knew that the more I floundered about, the deeper and more foully I must sink myself ; and therefore, after eyeing me intently for a moment during this process of exploration “*in deploratâ re,*” he took the book from me, closed it, returned it to me, and, rising, left the school, with the emphatical injunction, “Mind that you never do such a thing again.” The words were like the touch of Ithuriel’s spear. I started up to my own consciousness in all my deformity, and felt as if I were all over but one blush,—one flagrancy of shame. I suppressed myself for a moment, but the impulse was too powerful to be resisted. I ran out, overtook him before he reached his home, and, looking up into his face,—“Sir,” I said, “what I told you was not true,—I knew the verses were in Ovid.” He stopped, and gazed at me an instant. The expression of his countenance I remember,—his admonition I forget; but what it should have been, and what it probably was, I cannot doubt. “Very well,—you are a good little fellow, I dare say; and I’m quite sure now that you’ll mind what I told you, never to do such a thing again.”

This, to some persons, may appear a mere idle story ; but if it be so, I am very much deceived in it. That simple act was, perhaps, my moral salvation. By the confession of the fact I abjured the practice for ever. I could not have brought myself to repeat such an avowal. I felt that, if there was any grace in it at first, that grace *resided in its singleness, and would be spoiled by repeti-*

tion. It would have been in morality what metal upon metal is in heraldry,—it would have marred the whole achievement,—falsified the escutcheon. If this be so, how important is it for parents, and those who stand in their place, to encourage, by all possible means, the development of such a disposition. They should receive candor and confidence in every case with open arms, and stamp with the strongest brand of reprobation every thing that bears the semblance of duplicity. A boy who gets into a habit of confessing the sins that he may have committed must do one of two things;—he must relinquish either the confession or the commission,—he will not persist in both. To our conscience, indeed, this is what the best and wisest of us have perhaps often practised, but to those with whom we are anxious to stand well, never. The baseness of the thing would be too palpable,—it would stand out too grossly,—the disgust that it must create in those whom it might be our purpose to conciliate would be too evident. So long, then, as we can be sure of this habit of confidence, we may be equally sure that there will be but little occasion for it. Confession and avoidance are coupled in the legal phrase, and in the moral law they may stand, and justly, in an equally close conjunction. It was a heinous omission of our Reformers, that, when they abolished the Catholic practice of confession, they did not provide, or at least enjoin, some familiar or other substitute for it.

CHAPTER III.

“ That many may be meant
By the fool multitude that choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach ;
Which pries not to the interior, but like the martlet
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.” — SHAKSPEARE.

“ So build we up the being that we are.
Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,
We shall be wise perforce.” — WORDSWORTH.

OF all that is good in the early habits, and discipline, and conduct of a boy, there is, of course, very little that he can convey by any explanation to others. In fact, he is himself, for most part, utterly unconscious how, or why, or for what purpose, he learns and does what is ordained him. The mere creature of impulses and impressions, — fashioned in the mould of circumstances, — blind to all objects but those immediately before him, he can no more render a reason of his daily course of life, or foresee its tendency in his mind, than the bird or brute beast can account for its preparatory acts of instinct. In short, when children in body, we are but infants in mind, and as infants we take what is given us, and grow and thrive upon it unconsciously, but never dream of stretching forth our hands for the purpose of rational selection, or using our eyes in the way of active inquiry. The consequence is, that, when the thinking faculty awakes within us, it awakes as from a dream, and a dream of which we can remember next to nothing. However, I can both call to mind and communicate one or two of my early habits ; and, such as they were, I here give them to all who may *condescend to take them upon my recommendation.*

In the first place there was the habit — seemingly, perhaps, insignificant, but truly a most valuable one — of raising my eyes from my book after the perusal of a sentence, repeating it in my mind, and endeavouring to make out its meaning. I remember the origin of this habit as well as my occurrences of this day. I was required to give a rule, and, on my recital of it, I was unable to answer the sharp question of the master, “ And now what do you mean by it ? ” I was nonplussed and put to shame ; but the question was followed by a piece of advice which I laid up religiously in my heart, and thereby turned my humiliation of the moment to very good account. Again, I was in the practice — at my dear mother’s instance, and never was there a more blessed fruit of motherly affection — of retracing my progress through the day, and thinking over its passages, as soon as I was in bed. Paley, if I mistake not, or some other moralist, compares this habit in ethics to that of “ taking stock ” in trade, and seems to think that he gives it great credit by the comparison. For myself, I believe, on the contrary, that he has fallen very far short of a fair exposition of its merits. It is not merely an account, — it is moreover a renovation, — a reimpression of the characters, impressed perhaps at first but faintly, and as sure to perish as so much writing on the sea-sand, unless for this second notice. But on these two habits — their uses and advantages — it is needless to say much. All that could be said will already have been anticipated. Still, I would fain impress on teachers, and still more on parents, the vast importance of encouraging such practices in children, or rather of framing and exercising them habitually, late and early, in season and out of season, wherever there is occasion. Such habits are the first rudiments of *the mind*, — the materials of the mould wherein it is to be cast ; — their use is the *punctum saliens*, the source of

that self-originating power, which Plato, in a beautiful passage given in one of Cicero's works, declares to be the very essence of the intellect, and which, if any body want it, he wants the first and most absolute requisite of the reasoning faculty. And these injunctions should be given, not merely once in a while, but so frequently as to show the boy that you are in earnest, and that you make a point of his compliance. You must not expect that he will take a hint of this kind, at the first word, as readily as if it were only a direction to leave his books and amuse himself. As the prophet says, precept must be upon precept, and line on line, whenever you deal with children for their advancement. What you would have them practise often, you must prescribe often too. If a boy is reminded of what he should do only once in a year, the chances are that he will scarcely be brought to do it so much as once in his life. A grown person, indeed, when he hears any thing that may seem worth knowing, treasures it up in his heart, and applies it as occasions happen, by the mere force of volition ; but the great defect of the boy is, that he has no such force, — none at least actuating him from within, — no energy of will whatever. This, then, must be supplied by dint of continual impressions from without. You cannot knead the clay too much, if you would work it up to a perfect fineness of temper. Taken in this way there is some truth in that most odious of adages, "*Vexatio dat intellectum.*" Much must be done, and repeatedly and perseveringly, before the practice can be brought to a point and made effective.

There is another practice, or rather what should have long since been one, of most cheerful service to the young spirit, — the study, that is, of poetry. I do not mean that children should be taught to rave and recite by the half-hour together, professedly for the gratification, *but, in point of fact, to the indifference or disgust, of*

friends and visitors, as we of this generation were compelled to do by the wisdom of our forefathers. Happily, the practice is now defunct, — dead, of its own mortal absurdity ; so that it would be lost time to prove, easy as the proof is, that, of all foolish exhibitions, this is the most accomplished foolery, the most absolute soul-sickener. But what I do mean is, that poetry should be made an element of the spiritual child, a portion of his daily diet ; that he should learn and repeat every day a passage, as moral as it may be, but withal really poetical ; that is, in Milton's definition, simple, sensuous, and impassioned, — sensuous, in modern English (for the comfort of pious mothers be it observed), meaning only, replete with sensible imagery and impassioned meaning, — full of pathos. This — I vouch my experience for the fact — will make a new creature of him, if his clay be only fine enough to take the fire kindly. The first poetry that I learned, barring, of course, *Norval*, the *Sorrows of the Blind Man*, and others of the like stamp, was the epistle of Penelope to Ulysses, in Ovid. By the by, when there is question of poetry for a boy, give me Latin for choice, — in preference, I mean, to English ; for Greek, again, is above all comparison of either, — the exquisiteness of the ancient rhythm, and the waviness of its flow, does so deliciously commend it. Penelope to Ulysses, — that was my initiation ; and in all simplicity of faith I do affirm that that epistle, and especially the lines, *Troja jacet*, and so a dozen on, made a very bonfire of my heart, in respect of warmth, illumination, and joyousness. It was within a week or two of the holydays that it was given me to learn ; and I well remember, that, as I was going home by the mail on a raw winter's night, with my thoughts full to spoutingness of these genialities, I wanted nothing more to fence the cold of as bitter weather as ever starved a Christian. There was really

some danger, that is, if the spirit of poetry had been as inflammatory as that of the still, lest I should have perished, somewhere in that period, of internal combustion. However, I survived this danger, and am here to tell the story. Frequently, even when at home, and in the midst of home enjoyments, did I glide off to the lone places, the shrubberies, and old walnut avenues, and there startle the rooks to silence, and overcrow the crows, by my clamorous recitations. Wonderful ! that, three or four thousand years after date, the conflagration of Troy should revive from its embers, and burst out afresh in the wild heart of a schoolboy !

I repeat it, then, cultivate the poetical faculty, set the sweet vein a flowing, and then, haply, the intellectual region may become a land of milk and honey to its possessor. Depend upon it, poetry is the very salt of the soul, no less genial an ally to the spiritual, than the sherris sack of Falstaff was to the physical man. It is the source of every enjoyable feeling ; mirth, at least in its refinement, is poetry ; admiration is poetry ; devotion is poetry ; all sentiment is poetry ; every thing in the heart that rises above brute, sensual satisfaction is poetry ; — and, more than all this, I will take upon me to affirm, that no man was ever truly great, or truly devout, or truly admirable in any way, but he was a poet, in *posse* at least, if not in *esse*. It is not from any personal prepossession that I testify thus ; alas ! no, the fiery-winged horse has broken down under my weight as often — and that is right seldom — as I have essayed to mount him ; but I say it from my own conviction, and I hope to the persuasion of my readers. The vulgar, indeed, those who have never known its spirit or been penetrated with its influence, can have no notion of its value ; but from those who have felt it thoroughly, withdraw it but once, and you *have withdrawn the sun from their seasons.* Cultivate,

then, the disposition, cherish it, and make much of it ; and this in spite of the blatant beasts that would gainsay you ; in spite of all the cold, stiff, ungenial clay that was ever made up into metaphysical or statistical dogmatists.

But this is another digression. To resume, then, my proper self. For some time past, under a variety of influences, and by their favor, I had gradually been extending the range of my ordinary and worldly understanding, — understanding, I mean, as distinct from reason ; the former being the creature of habit, and learning, and observation ; the latter, by as clear a parentage, being the creature of thought. Since I went to Eton, I had read much, and construed much, and learned much, and repeated much. I had, moreover, seen and heard a good deal ; my humanities, or in other words my physical properties, had been quickened by my experience as a fag, and therefore, from all these causes, I was become an understanding animal. But they could have made me nothing more ; they could not have taken me, as it were, beyond myself, nor elevated me above the standard of my moral powers, however much they had been multiplied and extended ; no more than a point can generate any thing else beside a line, though it be produced to infinity. Read as I would, learn as I would, acquire as I would, still, as the French say, *J'en serais resté là*. I must undergo the regenerative process, or remain as far as ever from the dignity of a thinking man, an original, or, to speak more pointedly, an originative mind. Without a new and special commission I could never hope, by all the patiences that I could practise, to raise myself from the ranks of the intellectual service. But, alas ! *non cuivis homini*, how was such a privilege to be attained ? *This is the grand consideration, and I am now about to enter upon it.* The use and practice of the world is a

sufficient schoolmaster for those who care only to advance themselves in the world's ways ; it is to other and nobler spirits, to those whose ambition it is to separate themselves from the herd, to rise to the rank of minds-men, that I shall henceforth consecrate, for the most part, the accounts of my experience.

I think I was in my thirteenth year, as nearly as I can hit the calculation, when I was released from the drudgery of fagging, and became my own master. This was a joyous day for me. The most joyous, I believe, for Eton boys in general, of their whole existence ; except only the first days of marriage and fatherhood, for those who are destined for such happiness. As for myself, my servitude had lost its hatefulness before it was thus brought to its period ; the sting was not in the tail. As I grew older, I grew wiser withal, or at least more knowing. I acquired a certain tact and facility ; I was not liable, as I had been, to be frightened into actual blundering from the fear of possible consequences ; my experience had begun to tell in my favor. In short, I had my wits about me, and was tolerably well up to my work. My service was softened into subordination ; and the bitterness of my spirit into acquiescence. This favorable change of my disposition was shown also in my literary progress. I had begun by this time, and it was full late, to get my balance, and to settle into something like steadiness in the school studies. At the time I speak of, I could read an easy Latin author at sight, and had made some progress in Greek, not merely by groping my way word by word in a lexicon, but by my general perception of the language. I could dash off a copy of verses, where the subject suited me, *proprio marte*, and could even put together what might pass for a theme, allowances of course being made for a host of crudities and puerilities. As for the histories of Greece and

Rome, I could have repeated them point by point ; nor was I altogether a stranger at home, though my acquaintance, I regret to say it, with our English annals was brought about by mere accident, and not in the authorized course of study. Besides all this, as I was an omnivorous reader, and gifted withal, by a happy proportionment of faculties to desires, with a memory of sufficient capacity, I had laid up a good store of that kind of popular information which tells in loose talk, although it can hardly be said to point to any very important issue. This was the sum of my accomplishments, and it seems from their recital that I had laid my foundations wide enough in all conscience, if not altogether as deep as might have been desired. I had done more,—I had got together a heap of materials, and there they lay, unsightly, indeed, and confused at present, but ready at any time to serve their proper purposes at the discretion of the architect. The question was, whether I had the energy to frame them, so far as they were serviceable for that use, into an intellectual structure, or whether they were to cumber the ground as a brute mass, a monument of ineffective laboriousness.

I say, to cumber the ground, because, metaphorically taken, and applied to our moral being, such is really the effect of accumulation. The man who is continually reading and learning, without ever putting himself to the practice of framing and modelling what he has brought together, does but lay up his stores in heap, to corrupt, and rot, and stink, and minister, not to health, but to disease. This is the true congestion of the mind ; for in this, as in a hundred other cases, the process of mind and body is parallel. There is a strict analogy between them. We should never make a sink of our memory. *Whatever we receive there, we should receive only to subject it to farther operation, to refine, to purify, and digest it;*

else, we shall be overlaid and oppressed by it, as by an incubus. It is a thoroughly English epidemic, this lectrience, or reading rage, if you like the vernacular form better ; we are the greatest readers extant, born only, it should seem of many of us, for the benefit of the book-sellers. The fact may serve to account for the conjunction, so puzzling to foreigners, of our two natural characteristics, selfishness, to wit, and its apparent antithesis, the suicidal propensity. This latter predilection, indeed, is as common now on the continent as with us, but this I take to arise from the growth of irreligion there, and the consequent recklessness of the future ; set but that element aside, and the balance will again come over to us ; our English *morgue* — see how senses as well as words will occasionally jump together — will then be as préeminently suicidal as ever. But to work the proof of my proposition on, if not absolutely out, your mere library lounger is generally an antisocial, and therefore, probably, a selfish being. This I will presume as a thing beyond all doubt from the very necessity of it. He is also *quoad suicide*, a creature of thick-coming fancies, a bundle of ragged, catching nerves, and generally, to crown all, as deep in the books of his doctor and quack medicine-seller as in his own. He is not merely as selfish, then, as the miser, but as fretful too, and for the same reasons, if I had only leisure to speculate upon them. The conclusion comes of itself. Such being the circumstances, it is no such mighty wonder that the Englishman, the rich and idle one, I mean, is so commonly found to be utterly regardless of others, and, at the same time, weary of his own life, — full of himself to loathingness and very satiety.

Suppose we take the portraiture of such a man. He comes up from his breakfast-room, and stands a minute *or two with his back before the fire*, looking around him

for some object. His mind must lean upon something or other, for it is too feeble, too carcass-like, to stand even a moment by itself. His object of course is generally a book. He takes it down, opens it, pores over it, reads on and on, or at least follows the sentences with his eye, until his sight begins to swim, and himself to feel as no one but himself ever does feel. Shakspeare must have had him in his eye, when he coined the word “brain-sickly.” He yawns, stretches himself, and rises from his chair, his tone, if he had any at first, utterly gone, his spirits exhausted, and his whole being lowered, relaxed, and distressed utterly. Such continual reading is like the continual dropping of water upon the hand, the pestilent nuisance of the Proverbs, whereby, if we do not move its muscles, and work its fingers withal, it will be numbed and deadened. So it is with our present man. He has been reading all this while passively and not actively ; his perceptions are dazzled and confused by the multitude of images presented to them. And all this because he has not the faculty of pausing at every point of interest ; of weighing, searching, and questioning ; of arbitrating between truth and the author ; of improving hints, and verifying conclusions. Probably there is no man living who would go into a society of talkative people on the terms of listening, with his attention at full stretch, through a long winter’s evening, and not opening his mouth to utter so much as a single syllable. This would be as bad as the galleys ; and yet to condemn one’s self to a book under the same restrictions, *mutatis mutandis*, is only one degree more tolerable. Without thought to animate them, these said books have been said, and truly, to be the sepulchres of the living soul ; and, indeed, the imputation is short of the truth. They not only immure it, but, like thieves in the candle, while they *obscure its light*, they consume the bodily substance

whereon it depends, and so hasten its dissolution. Observe the proof:—the learned of ancient days, when printing as yet was not, and books were scarce things, became what they were by thinking much and reading little. To this habit, and principally I believe by it, they lived, many of them, to be the marvels of longevity, —

“ While we, their sons, a puny race of men,
Are dwindled down to threescore years and ten ”;

and if we last so long, the chances are that we outlive nine out of ten among our fellows. Taken as a class, the modern men of letters are the most mortal of all subjects to mortality, they, and their productions with them. That is a fair retaliation. It is some comfort, to be sure, that the *necis artifices* should follow, and that quickly, the many victims that they have sent before them to the cold forgetfulness of the tomb. But the coroners are slow to do their duty. My memory may deceive me, but I cannot call to mind a single case, where, on the death of a self-sacrificing student, his books were condemned for a deodand.

I have mentioned that, on some occasion or other, one of my masters pointed out to me certain methods, or artifices, as they might be called, for the easier mastery of my lessons. May he have his reward for it in heaven ! I owe him, and I here acknowledge it, a mighty debt of gratitude, such as no exertions or sacrifices of mine can ever repay. However, for a long time I was far from improving the advantage to the utmost. Occasionally, indeed, I practised them, often enough to assure myself of their importance, but too rarely to transmute the practice into a habit. The fault was not in myself individually, but in the feebleness of my age. It is difficult, at a later time of life, even to conceive the difficulties that are embodied with so strong and mountainous a reality against

any thing like a self-originating advancement of the child.
Go and consult Beattie's Pilgrim, —

"O, who can tell how hard it is to climb," —

and so through the lines that follow. I am not familiar with the poem ; I do n't know how many more good stanzas there may be in it, but one at least there is, and that is the opening one.

To expect that a child at school should act at his own instance up to any general instructions, and frame himself from them into a habit, is a thing out of all reason. It is just as likely that a lump of wax should fashion itself at the word of command after the model of the moulder. If the eye of the master be necessary for the effectiveness even of his servants, how much more so is that of the parent over the unmeaning and ill-sustained exertions of the child. A disposition so nearly fluid can retain the characters written upon it no otherwise than by their frequent renewal. It is like the flight of an arrow from a bow. For a time the force of the first impression may be maintained, but as the resistance of the atmosphere is kept up, and the distance from the hand that launched it is increased, it diminishes rapidly, and ere long is spent absolutely. However, I did what I could, all that my feebleness would allow me, and that it may be imagined was but little. I had no energy of will within me, and the impulse from without, that should have answered the same purpose, was lacking. And so I made my experiments as the master had recommended me ; he was surprised into amazement at their success ; repeated them some four or five times, and then, as the novelty wore off, by degrees I lapsed into indifference, and dropped the practice altogether. It could hardly be otherwise. I wanted every thing that I needed ; sympathy, counsel, companionship, encouragement, every thing but good-will ;

that, indeed, is a necessary element of success, but it will not do its work alone ; and should it be left alone, it will be only to dwindle and die away for lack of support. No less a man than Pascal, if I be not mistaken, declares that he abandoned mathematics, after having carried them on at more than one point further than any man of his age, only because he found that there were so few people with whom he could commune on such a subject, and that therefore the satisfaction of the study was lost in its isolation. Is it any wonder, then, after this, that a poor child should shrink from the task of perseverance in a lonely and unfriended endeavour ? As they say in law, I had not the means of reporting progress. I had no mother there, as I had at home, to receive me with open arms, and a smile such as only a mother's love can radiate, as I ran up to her, breathless with haste, and my countenance all alight with joy, to tell her that I had found out why such a thing was so-and-so, and what was the meaning of this or that passage, and who such a person was, and all about him ; and then to be kissed by her, and blessed by her, and sent back to my book in pride and gladness. There was encouragement indeed, but here was none. It was as lonesome as digging by night in a church-yard. To my schoolfellows, had I spoken of such a thing, I should have seemed as one that mocked ; and mockery enough I should have got for it in return, if I got nothing worse. They were incredulous of any thing professing to be a rule, if it were not included in the range of the Eton Grammar. Such, then, was the birth of my reasoning faculty ; for from that incident I date it. It showed itself but for a moment, apparently stillborn, and was seen no more for a while afterwards. Still it was not dead, but sleeping, in a state of suspended animation, till some *kindred touch should chance in a happy moment to awaken it.*

In the interval, I fell back upon my school studies, gave up in a great measure my independence, and resigned myself to float along quietly with the tide, after the example of my fellows. This same tide was an easy, and pleasant, and furthering one, though not perhaps of the deepest. Nor was it by any means the most direct course that we could have taken. Many a shorter cut to the different proposed points of attainment has been made by the utilitarians, but none could be so genial or agreeable ; and if we had more leisure to dwell upon the scenes that we passed through than we need have had, yet we were so much the more likely to be imbued with the spirit of all that was loveliest and most admirable in them. To waive metaphor, the Greek and Roman classics were our chief study, as every body at all interested in public schools must know, and versification the chief exponent of our progress in that study. Now, as these two facts have been very strangely misunderstood, and very wilfully misrepresented, I shall take leave to say a few words upon them, apprising the reader of my intention, in order that he may, if it so please him, “ overleap the bounds,” and get at once to the other side of this my epenthesis. The leap will not be a long one, a few pages at the utmost.

The science-mongers of the day and *omnium* stock-jobbers in literature are at great pains to persuade the public, that, if a boy is sent to Eton, all that he can learn there will be certain dead languages, which he will never afterwards have occasion to talk or write, and very little wish to read if he be a wise man, together with the faculty of writing verses, but only in those same dead languages. Now this is not the truth, — it is about the truth I admit, — but it is short of the truth in some respects, and beyond it in others, and below it, basely below it, in all. *To be sure*, if one must speak at large, there is but one

subject, to wit, the classics ; but that one is capable of as many variations as you please. The medium is either Latin or Greek, and nothing else ; but the inquiries prosecuted through it may run over as wide a range as any universalist of them all could desire. To be busy about many things is the fool's business ; the one thing needful for furtherance in any course of learning is the faculty of thought ; and that once secured, every thing else will be added thereupon as it may be wanted. The largest grasp is not always the best handful. The mind, like any material substance,

"*Amittit vires spatio diffusus inani.*"

I grant that there may not be very much — though be it said there is a good deal more than a little — of positive practical use in the dead languages ; but what then ? We want them not for their own services, but as a medium to acquire other things ; for example, the faculty of attention, — that of memory, — the habit of composition, — the rudiments of thought ; and the simpler that medium, the more tasteless, and colorless, and useless for any thing else, the better for its particular purpose. Try any one of the sciences by the same test, say the mathematics. There is not one problem in a hundred that we can or do apply materially, when we have learnt it ; except, indeed, so far as the reason of it during the process is wrought into the intellect, and resides therein as a constituent of its general power applicable on all occasions. We must proceed from principle to practice, — provide first the abstract faculty, and then give it its particular application ; otherwise, if you throw the two together, you make a mongrel, mulish mixture, ending in itself, and incapable of procreating any thing else. If, indeed, the object of education be to make up the mind for exhibition, as one would a prize ox, and to lay on it as much as one possibly can without absolutely smothering and burying it alive

in its own fat, — or, if you will, fatuity, — why, then, in that case, commend me of all people to your *omnes-*
cibile slopsellers, your professors of every thing and proficients in nothing ; but if the quality of the spirit, and not the quantity of the flesh wherein it is enveloped, be the chief consideration, that is altogether a different case. It behoves us, then, to take up against these Masters Shallow, or shallow masters, the words of Falstaff, — “ What care I for the bulk and big assemblage of a man ? give me the spirit, Master Shallow ; I say, give me the spirit.” They remind me very much, do these good people, of certain generals that I have read of, who made it a point of honor to extend the field of their operations as much as possible, and with that view to take in fortress after fortress at all events ; and what is the end of it ? Why, simply this, — when they have succeeded to their heart’s content, they find that their whole force must be frittered away in maintaining garrisons, and nothing left them to carry on the main purposes of the war. I would fain ask these utilitarians a simple question. How is it that they are content to abjure their creed by insisting here so strenuously on the diffusion of labor, whereas the division of it at all other points is a very watchword of their party ? These omniscitient gentry resemble nothing so much as one of the monster words of Aristophanes, — framed, or rather jumbled, in the phrase of Milton, to make us stare and gasp, — loose, incoherent compounds, thrown together by no other rule than the caprice of the author, and kept together by the force, not of mutual attraction, but of propping and bolstering in the memory, — a tail of some twenty or thirty joints, without any head or leading principle whatever, dragging its slow length along, and overborne by its own cumbrousness. *Whereas what is learnt at Eton is for the most part learnt genially, and taken up into the system, there to be circu-*

lated healthfully by way of assimilation. Composition is the basis of the plan, and no one can compose without a meditation more or less attentive of his subject. So much for the general points of difference ; and now a word or two in favor of the Muses, or at least of the allegiance humbly offered to them at Eton, in the practice of versification.

Of all exercises in composition there practised, this is certainly the most frequent. Latin essays in prose are indeed occasionally required, but by no means as regularly. This is the darling topic of our antagonists. Hence a whole torrent of abuse, ridicule, and protestation. How far all this may be deserved it is our business to inquire. And first, I admit, *in limine*, I concede most freely, that, if a boy is taught to write verses, as the anticlassicalists say that he is there, only that he may continue to write them in mature age, and dance along the path of life to the tunes of the “metre-ballad-mongers,” he is then very ill taught. But this is not so. He learns versification as the child learns his alphabet, not that he may be ever afterwards repeating it, but merely as the first step of his advancement ; and a most important step it is, and in most cases, with a view to our constitution, as necessary as it is important. For poetry is the expression of nature, — of nature, indeed, in her elevation, but still of nature ; and hence it is that children find themselves so perfectly at home in the first elements of it ; whereas any moral or religious abstractions would be as strange to them as a new world. One of the conditions of poetry, in Milton’s definition of it, is, that it be sensuous, — that is, abounding in sensible images, — such images as are the easiest of apprehension to children, — simple and sensuous. Now this is precisely to our purpose. Give any easy subject to a child, — the seasons, *for example, spring, summer, or autumn*, — tell him to

put down on paper his impressions, his ideas of it, and the chances are, if he be not a very lout, that he will do it readily ; and that the ideas so transcribed from his imagination would be just of the kind that run most simply into verse, that belong to poetry. But set the same child down to write a few sentences in prose on any one of the virtues or vices, or other arbitrary abstractions, and what sad stuff he would make of it ! It was remarked, I think, by Locke, that he would wish any young friend of his to learn mathematics ; and that not so much to make him a mathematician as a reasonable man. And so of versification. It is not intended, nor is that its effect, to make poetical dreamers of us, but, by facilitating the habit of composition, to elevate us into thinking men.

Thus much I think may be sufficient for the vindication of the principle ; as for the practice, I confess that it is in some respects carried farther than that principle will warrant. For instance, the authorities of Eton are not contented with the exaction of a copy of verses every week from every boy above the lowest forms, but they must have a copy of lyrics also. Now, bad poetry, to all tastes that I ever heard of, is the most nauseous of all bad things, — except to the author of it ; and bad lyrics, by as general a consent, are admitted to be the very worst form of bad poetry. Furthermore, only one rhythm is requisite for the exercise of the poetical faculty, — it is lost and bewildered in the labyrinthine multiplicity of metre, — the vein flows best in an individual channel ; and therefore, all things considered, I think it would be the best wisdom to abandon the hope and practice altogether. Again, it sounds rather strangely to hear that, whenever an exercise is remitted, it is the essay rather than the lyrics ; though certainly the latter, especially in *the case of the higher boys, the proiectiora ingenia,*

have much the better claim of the two to be sent to Coventry ; and even if they should remain there once for all, to sing the praises of Godiva, I am by no means sure that the good Genius of Eton would droop the head at such a severance.

Thus did time pass with me between my tenth and thirteenth years. Writing verses, and attempting to write essays, — essaying, in one word, — poring over lexicons and grammars, — doing suit and service in my tutor's pupil-room, — by the by, not as regularly as I ought ; for there were opportunities that no one could miss but to his certain loss, — getting up my school-lessons, — and abiding the catastrophe of the whole plot in the school itself. All this labor fell more lightly on my shoulders, by the favor of my good memory, than on those of my schoolfellows in general. I was rather above my work than otherwise ; they, on the contrary, or very many of them, were sadly below theirs. I could not but feel this superiority as a feather in my cap, — and, in so feeling it, I estimated it at its proper worth ; for it was really nothing more ; but the consciousness of it, reconciling me, as it did, to my own esteem, and raising me from my self-abasement, was in that way of much greater advantage to me than the mere superiority of scholarship could ever have been. I found out that I was something and somebody, and began to think of vindicating what I conceived to be my proper place among my comrades. This was almost the first social satisfaction that my scholarlike habits here at Eton had made good to me ; but it was the first of a long and still lengthening series. From my first perception of self-sufficiency, I never lost sight of it. I cherished the thought of it within me, until gradually it had illuminated, and warmed, and cheered my whole being. Indeed, I have a strong opinion that the blessedness of success in mental exertions is as great in our

younger days, albeit then most imperfect, as at any later period of our lives ; as an element of happiness, it is at least as important then as ever. There are many men now of ten, twenty, thirty thousand a year, and far upwards, than my contemporaries at Eton. Children of such prospects are often indulged into bad habits, and then sent off to school on the spur of some sudden caprice, with a very small stock of scholarship. This was their predicament in many instances. They were mortified at their insignificance among their fellows ; afflicted by the leaden weight of their stupidity ; racked, and jaded, and exhausted, head and heart, by their vain attempts to learn, in the hurry of the crisis, what they should have been preparing to learn months and years before. At such times, and in the extremity of their distress, I have not a doubt but that many of them would have renounced in my favor half their birthright, if I could but have imparted to them in exchange a portion of the poor scholarship wherewith my early bookishness, my memory, and I know not what other causes, had endowed me. Whereas those same men,—they that were then children,—supposing our relative powers to remain the same, a very unlikely supposition, but still a possible one,—they would not, I say, now, and I verily believe it, think the difference worth redeeming by the sacrifice of what they could very well spare, a tithe, or even a twentieth part, of their incomes,—*Scoto talentum, philosopho triobolum*,—that is about the average of their distribution.

But this is speculation. However, the fact was, that I had begun to appreciate my acquirements, and to congratulate myself upon the result of the labor bestowed upon them. My disposition was settling into something like consistency, firm, independent consistency, and I began to look about me, and think for myself of such *plans and projects* as I thought good, instead of yielding

blindly to the impulses given me by others. As I was sufficiently prompt in my despatch of school business, I had leisure afterwards for all kinds of extrascholastic reading as they fell in my way. I was not very fastidious in my choice, nor had I any reason to be so ; novels, plays, poetry, history, ethics, philosophy, — gold, wood, and stubble, — every thing, in short, as it came to me, — I threw together, to make my foundations. I seasoned myself, as they say of timber, with all these various influences ; and, by the process, became all the fitter for the purposes of the architect.

I have spoken of certain tricks of apprenticeship recommended to me, as means and appliances of study, by one of our masters, — adminicular aids, as they may be called, — whereby a poor weakling like myself, unable as yet to walk erect, might help himself up the ascent of that hill of learning, so enchantingly pictured by Milton in his treatise on education. I had never forgotten them, nor indeed disused them absolutely for any long period, although I had profited by them but little for reasons above given. I think it was in my fifteenth year that I began to put them in practice anew, regularly and of set purpose, — that one method, particularly, of pausing, and reconsidering in my mind every sentence of a book, as soon as I had ended it. It happened, while I was thus engaged, that I made a discovery of my own, suggested to me no doubt by my subject-matter, but still “adoperated” by myself, and from my own head. It was simply this ; to go through every sentence, or, if it be an unusually long one, every member of it, at one breath ; and then, recollecting one’s self afresh, — mind, in the Latin meaning, *recolligere* is the word, — to proceed to its next neighbour. This is a very simple, and it may appear a very slight thing ; but it was very effectual, nevertheless, *in my own case*, and would be no less so, —

dare to say, with any one else. The fact is, that the simplest truths, as Providence in its beneficence has ordained, are always the most important. Whatever is hard to understand, whether in divinity, politics, or any thing else, we may suspect is either no truth at all, or a very worthless one. The misfortune is, that we pass by the simplicity of truth as one of the vulgar, great or little, would a painting by Raphael, for the very reason that it is so simple, and true, and natural, without any salient points, or technical artifices, or tricks of affectation, to strike us ; and so with my precious discovery. There is probably no reader of us all who has not felt a sort of lassitude beginning to creep over him at about the fourth or fifth page—sooner or later, *pro ingenio*—of any sermon, or treatise, or history,—any thing, in short, that requires more attention than a letter from one's sister, or a paragraph in a newspaper. This is so because our faculty of attention is let out and diffused all at once, and consequently is soon at its stagnant level ; whereas it should be taken at turns, as by the strokes of a syringe, at *prises* and *reprises*, as the French say, and then it will outlast the occasion, if it be not a very long one.

The discovery, as it is a pretty obvious one, must have been made, I presume, by hundreds of habitual readers before my time. If so, they wore it in their own bosoms as a secret charm, and took care that the world should be none the wiser for it. One would suppose that it could not but be known and recommended, as an aid of elocution ; but I am not sure even of that, and certainly I never heard a word, nor ever saw a word in print, of its uses as subservient to the intelligence of what we read. As to this, it may be said the thing is insignificant in itself, —a mere bubble,— and accordingly it has never been honored with more notice than it deserves. *Well, I impose nothing upon any man. I am content to*

leave every one to his own judgment, if he will only take the trouble to exercise it ; at all events, there is one advantage belonging to the method, — if it be really worthless, it is easily proved to be so. For myself I will state, not only that it carried me along with the sense and spirit of the writer most completely, but that it had a further, and perhaps still more important effect, — that of warming, and animating, and clearing, and, as it were, energizing the spirit by the slight exertion involved in it. But of this more anon. The point here proposed I shall have occasion hereafter to expand into a wide circle. At present I will only observe, in reference to what I have just said, and what I may say in future on the same subject, that the Egyptians, as I have read somewhere, I think in one of Coleridge's works, took the serpent for their type of the intellectual principle, from an observation, as it is stated, of a certain analogy in the progressive methods of the two, — the serpent, and the intellect as well, framing itself for one effort out of another, and, at the close of every advance, collecting itself for the succeeding one. This, or something like it, is the parallel that I have seen given ; but it holds no less exactly in other cases ; not merely the growing intellect, but the reading and thinking intellect too, may be thus illustrated and exemplified. However, to stand at present upon the single point, it is certain that so to read, if I may thus express myself, in a running stream, briskly and forwardly, is something very pleasant and satisfactory ; and if any one be desirous of the faculty he may be sure of his object by taking my practice home to himself, and applying it as often as he chooses.*

The book that I happened to have in my hands when

* It is curious that what I here assert of intellectual light is generally believed of physical light, — namely, that it is propagated by undulations.

the idea occurred to me was Bingley's History of the World, or Universal History, I forget which. Whatever its title, in substance it is little more than a diffuse chronological recapitulation of dates and events,—a skeleton of dry bones,—a book that the severest task-master that ever ruled a school would hardly expect his scholars to read to any better purpose than that of yawning, or going to sleep over it. Here, then, was a severe test, an *experimentum crucis*, for my method. Nevertheless, at the first trial, I was surprised at its extraordinary success. I had never dreamed of it as any thing more than a curious experiment; and suddenly, as its result, I found that an instrument of mighty efficacy was in my hands. At first I was perplexed and staggered, as one wanting belief; but, as I continued the process, reading sentence after sentence, and still with the same effect, my satisfaction and success keeping pace with the repetition, I felt that I had a new faculty. How it should have been so long dormant, giving neither a sign nor token of itself, was what I could not understand; nor how, at this particular moment, of all others, it had happened to disclose its existence, and wake into activity. I remember well, that, after a few minutes' practice, I paused, and looked around me, still lacking somewhat of assurance, wondering at myself and my achievement, and doubting marvellously whence this strange power could have proceeded. Smile, reader, if you will, at such a recital, but laugh not, I beseech you, outright, if you have any regard for truth and experience, and the honesty of a good intention. To tell my tale out, I found, as I went on in the same train, that my perceptions became clearer, my mastery of the subject more powerful, and my interest in it more and more animated; that by *thus "tribuendo suum cuique," and "singula singulis," by despatching*, in short, every sentence in its own breath,

I kept the force of my attention, or, at least, the main body of it, always in reserve, economizing it, as it were, by thus distributing it ratably and at intervals, instead of suffering it to run out loosely and at large, and so to lose itself in its expansion. I found, too, that my spirits, as well as my lungs, were brought into play, and that my faculties, generally, without being jaded by the process, were exercised gently, and cheered and invigorated by it. There may be something of mystery in this, at first sight; but look into it for a moment, and one's common sense may do much towards an explanation, without the aid of witchcraft. The measured regularity of the breath is necessary, as we all know, or must have felt, to the maintenance of the attention. A person breathless from haste, or eagerness, or cold shivering, loses the faculty of attention altogether as long as the fit is upon him; and, as it is only out of attention that intelligence can arise, it follows that the latter, with all its train of effects, can never exist at all if the former be impeded, or precluded, whether by causes connected with the respiration or any other.

It may seem strange, that, with such a power in my possession, cognizant, too, as I was of its value, I should have forbore to make the most of it, and restrained myself from its full enjoyment. Yet so it was. I was like the man in the Arabian Nights, who, by the favor of some Genius had become possessed of a talisman, and could not bring himself, after the first trial, to put it to any further proof, lest his faith should turn out to be a fiction, and he should awake from his failure as from a dream; or, to speak more palpably, now that I am in the likening vein, I was much in the condition of a poor man overwhelmed with his first inheritance of wealth beyond all power of putting forth his hand to use it. Soberly and seriously, I was much surprised, and my surprise

filled my mind, and left no space for the desire to ascertain, and verify, and improve the causes of it. Days, and I believe I might say weeks, had elapsed before I renewed my readings ; and, even then, I used them only occasionally, *pro re natâ*, to serve my present purposes, and not with any view of preparing myself a way over regions as yet unknown to me. Had I but done this, — had I stricken while the iron was hot, — ah ! then, indeed, I should have been nothing less than the glorification of what I now am.

O, for the days and years that are gone by and perished from me, as water spilt on the sea-sand, uselessly and irretrievably ! “ Where is the fable of my former life ? ” Alas ! the brilliancy of my day was spent utterly in its dawning. Feeble, and abortive, and fleeting has been the time that I have passed ; but other elements than these were within it, and had I but nurtured them, to me that foolish time had been the parent of a blissful eternity. But occasions are past, the hour of their reckoning is nigh at hand, even now my twilight is coming on, and my hopes are darkening into regrets. Could I once again but so much as touch the hem of “ the mantling train of far departed years,” surely it should be my salvation. But time, as it speeds on, gives us the pass but glancingly, like the rush of a carriage on a railway, or a rocket into the air ; we take no note of it while within our reach, and not till it is far away in the distance can we settle our sight steadily upon it, and estimate it duly. Days of my youth, — it is even so, — ye were sent to me on an angelic mission, your bosoms overflowing with flowers, and fruit, and all things, whatever there be, of use and loveliness ; these would ye have emptied into my hands, but I would not, and so *it was your law to leave me, taking with ye no token of my thankful acceptance.* Even now, methinks, I see ye

through the far air “gliding meteorous,” sinking into the dimness of distance, yet ever and anon looking back upon me, as frustrate angels, lovingly and lamentingly, in wonder at my strange folly. It saddens me to see them, as the sight of his ancestral domains is agonizing to the beggared spendthrift. My manhood should have borne the fruits of wisdom, and behold it has crowned itself only with the gray sorrows of experience,—hard, dry, marrowless, and distasteful experience,—the energy of the muscle aged into the inertness of the bone. My life has been as the passage of a ship over the ocean,—a pilgrim across the desert,—not a token of his industry, not a trace of his footsteps, not so much as a monument of his existence, no more than if his mother had never borne him. And this is my preparation for immortality. Long ere this my soul should have expanded itself beyond the limits of this world, and fitted itself for its futurity; my devotion should have made it wings, wherewith to rise upwards, and penetrate beyond the bounds of space, even to the presence and communion of God, there to be at home with its Maker. But truly here I am, grovelling on the ground, and feeding on the dust all the days of my life. Nevertheless the account will come. If time be but a portion of eternity, and if I use that portion as one abusing it most vilely, how shall not eternity revenge itself with burning and raging bitterness. It shall bruise my head, even as I have trodden upon its heel.

But, if I grieve thus deeply over my perished years, what must be my sorrow for the faculties that those years should have fostered into strength and fulness? The faculties, whereof the elements were in my soul, although, when they came to the birth, it had not strength to bring them forth; and so they perished together, the *mother and her offspring, the soul and its faculties.* This

is the second fall chargeable by every man upon himself, and not upon the delinquency of his first parent. For myself, feeble as I am in intellect, and unworthy to be named with hundreds and thousands of my fellow-creatures, yet am I confident that I might, as the meanest among us may, have risen higher than man ever yet rose, had I but done justice in my own person to the common endowments of our nature. As it is, the light that I have acquired serves only to show me the bideous development, the wide usurpation of darkness all around me. No man, I believe, since the creation, has ever spent a tenth part of his life on the proper study of self-improvement, — not one among us has bestowed the tithe of his time upon himself, — that is, upon his own mind. And yet great things have been done. Arts have risen into sciences, — barbarism has been lost in civilization, — the learning of man has elevated itself almost to the height of wisdom. How if the calculation had been reversed, if we had given as much time to our spiritual as we do now to our worldly hopes? Who shall say where our development would then have found its barrier? Many, even in this evil state, have gone forward further than any common eye could follow them; but let all that is possible be done, and not the most farsighted philosopher among us will be able to descry the limits of our intellectual attainment, — the horizon of our light and darkness; and yet, with these glorious gifts before us, we are but grovellers after all, — poor and abject as the miser amidst his money-bags, not from lack of wealth, but as wanting energy to use it. By calling our nature bad names, by dubbing ourselves worms and dung-flies, we think to escape from the responsibility of the ten talents; but it were well that we should at least *exhaust the stores so freely provided us, before we complain of our destitution.* Show me the man who has

made the most of his faculties, and I will show you a being sublimated to the height of the angelic nature, a miracle of all perfections. The fault, it has been said truly, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings. I am well assured that the intellect, or at least its essence, is a thing so noble, that it may be so refined into itself, as to approach the purity of the soul, and vindicate itself to a good degree from its slavish dependence upon the body ; spiritualizing the body itself by its pervading influence, and making it, in a measure, proof against corruption, instinct with a portion of its own lasting vitality, — in a word, embalming it. I have seen a case of this kind, and I have heard of others. Consult the experience of Cardan, oftentimes a quack, but where he was no quack a good philosopher. The *vivida vis animi* is the best preservative against the worm ; better than all the artifices of the tanner. As things are, our souls are like callow nestling birds taken out early, and caged in darkness, and fed with strange food, and taught to live out of their nature, — their qualities perverted, their energies tamed, their wings never exercised, or only by way of beating piteously against the bars of their prison. Such is the force of custom, “the excellent grand tyrant” ; so slavish is the condition of the spirit, that was born to soar heavenward, “as confident as is the falcon’s flight.” The man who shall assert in all its fulness the dignity of his kind, who shall raise humanity to the station awarded it by the Psalmist, a little below the angels, that man is yet to come ; and, alas ! long may he be expected. Come when he will, it will only be to shine over the general darkness of the world ; to be, like the evening star, alone in his glory at the twilight of the nations.

The acquisition of these habits was a new era to me, — *the commencement of my intellectual boyhood.* Pre-

viously I had been in my infancy, — or, at most, barely beyond the nursery of ideas. Quick to receive impressions, and scarcely less so to remember them upon a fresh suggestion, but slow, or rather utterly powerless, to frame them anew or recombine them. They were mine as the sun and stars were, — only to look at. I could not, as children say, have them to handle as I would, to deal with them as with my own property. I was the mere creature of impulse ; discretion I had none, nor any thing like self-originating control. Every thing that I saw I gazed at as a sight, — a spectacle, — not as a subject of sober observation or inquiry. In short, I was a mere child. But Time, that best of teachers, — by the by, I believe that I am the first to endow Time with this attribute, — as a comforter he has been long known, — Time, I say, like the sun, gradually advancing, had cleared the early mist from before my eyes, and given them to see as in daylight. I was becoming familiar with common appearances. I no longer regarded what was obvious in them ; I cared not so much for their outsides, but came insensibly to observe their causes and effects, the manner of their coming and going, their qualities and mutual relations. To say this is to say that I was the embryo of a philosopher, and so I was, — to be developed, however, or to fall into abortion, as chance and circumstances might betide me. But of this it is useless to say more. It is a thing not to be learned as a lesson, but to be gotten by use and habit, like a natural faculty. It will always come with time, and can never come else. Discipline, then, has nothing to do with it. However, this faculty, I am well assured of it, inured so much the sooner to my use from the prompture of my new reading and reconsidering habits. *They were the moving powers on this second level of my progress.* They taught me to take the lead of my

own mind,—to give its direction, instead of submitting it slavishly to the guidance of others, to the pressure from without ; they were slight matters, but they served me none the worse for that as a spring to set the whole watch-work of my mind in motion. *Ita saepe maximarum rerum momenta a minimis pendent.* The purpose is a grand one, but we must not set about it in a grand way. They served me, did these habits, as the priming of my piece, — a little thing, but a necessary one.

Give a boy a subject, and tell him to think upon it, you might as well tell him to create it out of nothing. Either he will not understand you, or, if he should, he will be not a whit the better able to do your directions. Return to him in an hour's time, and you will find him sitting there addling his head, his paper covered, not with rich inventions, — alas ! what fairy could have found them for him ? — but with scratches, and blotches, and ink-puddles, signifying, by no obscure type, the coagulation and stagnation of his thoughts. But tell him to do an easier thing, — show him a much simpler, and, therefore, for his boyish capacity, a much better method, — tell him as often as he reads to read every sentence, so that he may understand it, — that is, to insure, as in most cases he will, the *attention* of his mind by the *intention* of his breath, — breathing each sentence through fully and freely, and yet gently, from its commencement to its close, — fully, I say, though, of course, inarticulately, — pausing then for a moment, and anon a fresh start. Tell him withal from time to time to raise his eyes from his book, and ponder in the balance of his mind the sentence that he may have finished. Tell him all this, and assure yourself that he does it, and you may be certain that he has made the first step towards that capital and most god-like faculty, the *faculty of meditation*. And now I have *said my say*, — *I have sent my experience forth*. Her

garb and general behaviour is strange from its very simplicity,—the children, therefore, and perhaps some grown people as childish as they, will laugh at her most wantonly. Well, so be it,—truth is truth nevertheless,—I bide but the proof, and so laugh who will, and look who will, and prove who will. In my humble judgment the last will be the wisest.

For myself I tried these experiments but too seldom,—strange to say,—for I never tried them but I found and felt the good effects of them. They were the cork bladders that buoyed me up, and encouraged me to strike out as a swimmer in waters below my depth. They taught me to dwell upon and consider the sentences of other writers,—the ideas of other men; and this was only one step short of thought itself,—of the faculty, that is, of considering and arranging the ideas raised up by one's self, and for one's self, in one's mind, by virtue of memory or imagination, and by an independent act of will, not by the suggestion of books, or any outward things or persons.

This was a good point to have attained, though I had done nothing more. But advantages, like misfortunes, seldom come alone, and the practice that I have just mentioned was the occasion of other benefits to me, besides this remarkable one. In the first place, there was the habit of making experiments,—not only in itself a blessing, but the parent of many more, among others of experience,—which, if it be real and genuine, must be the result of this practice. It is said by Paley, that to frame ourselves to the habit of observation is to provide one of the chief resources of human happiness; and how can the observative habit arise otherwise than from the experimental one,—from the practice of making proofs and conclusions, either abstractedly in our own minds, or actually on the substances of the things themselves? It is, indeed, a thing of exquisite delight, this

secret inward exercise, this first stir of the quick intellectual faculty within us,—a thing of rapturous surprise, of self-complacent consciousness, of vague, tumultuous, gladdening anticipations. We have something that we can call our own,—a proper and peculiar power,—a faculty that our comrades wot not of, unless in the over-brimming joy of our hearts we are compelled to communicate it. Curiosity, indeed, the prompter of all experiments, is the very soul of the child,—the germ of his intellectual development. We can learn nothing effectually unless we have an interest in it, and to have an interest in it is only to be curious about it. In short, to be without curiosity is nothing less than to be a confirmed hopeless dunce. There is a story told of Dr. Johnson, that, as he was once on the river, engaged with a friend in discussing some point of fabulous history, he turned round, in a fit of good-humored caprice, to the young boy who happened to be rowing them, and asked him whether he could tell them any thing about the Argonauts. "No," said the boy, "but I should like to know about them, if I could get any body to teach me." This so delighted our good sage that he added a sixpence to the boy's fare, with many words of encouragement, and kind looks into the bargain. The man of morals and of letters proved himself here to be something more and higher,—a man of sound, practical, and gentle-hearted wisdom.

The curiosity of the child is the philosophy of the man,—or, at least, to abate somewhat of so sweeping a generality, the one spirit very frequently grows into the other. The former is a sort of pilot-balloon, a little thing, to be sure, but a critical one nevertheless, and pretty surely indicative of the height, as well as the direction, to be taken by the more fully expanded mind. Point out to me a boy of original, or what would generally be *called eccentric habits, fond of rambling about, a haunter*

of the wood-side and river-bank ; prone to collect what he can search out, and then on his return to shut himself up in his room, and make experiments upon his gatherings, — to inquire into the natural history of each according to its kind, — point such a one out to me, and I should have no difficulty in pronouncing him, without the aid of physiognomy, to be of far better and happier augury than his fellow, who does but pore over his books, never dreaming that there can be any knowledge beyond them. Of such stuff as this were all our philosophical geniuses, from Newton to Davy, and so, from the nature of things, they must generally be. And no wonder. The spirit that is powerful enough to choose, aye, and to take its own course, instead of resigning itself to the tide, must be a very powerful spirit indeed, — a spirit of right excellent promise.

And then there is the pleasure of the exercise, — a thing not sufficiently considered by tutors, who seem to think that the happiness of a boy, while a boy, that is for ten long years, is a matter of small account, — no matter at all, — a seed that must be thrown into the ground, to lie there and rot in cold obstruction, that it may spring up at a future season, and yield its increase in harvest. For myself, I mistrust this long foresight, — this overreachingness of anticipation ; there is no pleasure like the present one, and no use more pleasant, or pleasure more useful, to the child, whether for the present or future, than this one of amusing himself with experiments. It is evident from the appearance of a little nursling, that to walk alone and by himself, as soon as he is able to do so, is a marvellous gratification to him. He feels the comfort of independence, — for that moment he is self-sufficient. So it is with us in our intellectual childhood. We are delighted to walk alone, — *to ramble, and explore, and wonder, like a schoolboy*

bounds. The workings of the young faculties, so unaccustomed to feel themselves, the consciousness of power, prompting the "*anch io son pittore*," the urge of activity after so long a term of passiveness, novelty, the variety, the surprise,—all these are of surpassing interest and enjoyment. It is true that such experiments are generally the merest bubbles; but start and end in nothing before they are well made; in matter, their colors are glowing and vivid. The heart is awakened by them, the blood is put in circulation, and therefore the purpose is answered. It is true, that in maturer minds this spirit of making experiments is too apt to degenerate into restlessness, frivolity, egotistic vanity. The grown man who is always about trying conclusions leaves himself no time for thinking, or comparing, or verifying, or improving, or testing them; he is for ever scratching upon the surface instead of delving, as he should do, to the root. This second childishness, and therefore doting folly, had its service had been admirable, if only its practice had been earlier. In all science the wisdom of one often overshadows the foolishness of the succeeding one.

It is commonly said that a child's questions are often others the most difficult; and this is quite true; because they go to the depths of truth, whereas we are accustomed to draw water for our daily use from the surface only,—a surface in general, from its exposure full of all kinds of foulness,—and therefore softer and better accommodation to our services than the clear, but somewhat hard, genuineness of the truth. But the questions of children are often not only difficult, but very displeasing also; and this from some cause, from their tendency to the very root, sheer radicalism. As, for instance, a little boy will ask, *Why does papa eat so many nice things, — so much*

nicer than the poor people ? and, Why does he go about dressed so finely, though he never works ? and, Why do the other men let him have so much land, when he says that I ought not to have for my own garden any more than I can dig with the little spade ? and, Why do the poor people work for him all day, and then take their hats off to him, and call him, Sir ? Why do n't they take it in turns to do it, he one day and they the next ? Now, these are home-thrusts ; they are not to be parried. The only way to meet them is to blunt the weapon's point by opposing to it the defensive armor of the fool, the hard, stiff, impenetrable, ass-hidèd callousness of custom ; and accordingly this is done. Do n't be so troublesome ; do n't ask questions about what does not concern you ; nobody ever inquires of a little boy about such things, and therefore you need not know them ; or, if any answer at all be given, it is generally in the form of what the lawyers call a horse-plea, — I suppose because it runs away from the question, — a silly parsley-bed evasion, — a frustration instead of a reply. The child feels at once, for children are keenly sensitive of ridicule, that the purpose is to make a fool of him ; and the purpose is often gained. He is made a fool indeed, not merely for the moment, figuratively, but perhaps also, if the practice be continued, actually and ever after. Such is the encouragement given to the really commendable spirit of curiosity, the inquisitiveness of the child after truth and right principles. The fact is, that, wherever there is corruption and perversion of custom, truth and principles are the most inconvenient things imaginable. The less that is said about them the better, at least for dominant interests. But it is long before children can be made sensible of the convenience of such obliquities, — they cannot easily shuffle themselves into the *loose social habits*. They know nothing of conventional

phrases and opinions, — they are no sophists, and therefore in many cases they are the best and truest of philosophers. Tacitus, in his account of the old Germans, tells us that the words of their women were held by them in some circumstances to be sacred and even oracular. The reason of this, as of many modern German speculations, is to my obtuseness impalpably fine, too supersubtile for the handling ; but, if the rule were transferred to children, and their words on some subjects were regarded carefully and realized in action, — if the wisdom of the sucklings were accepted on Isaiah's recommendation, — I am quite sure that the world would be the better for it, and Christianity would have a chance not merely of growing to the ear, and then withering, but further, of ripening to the core, and yielding the full blessedness of its harvest. But this is beside my purpose. To resume it, I would say, that by this repression of curiosity, the natural, or at all events the necessary and inward light of children is extinguished, and worldly opinion is made the lanthorn of their paths, whereby they are expected to walk and hold their direction. But idle and impertinent inquisitiveness is much more to the general taste, and therefore in better favor. Let a child ask any such question as I have set down above, and the chances are that he will be snubbed, as they say, at once, for his troublesomeness, — he will be rapped with the leaden spoon on the head, and so taught his waiting observances, as the tame snake was by the little girl whenever it was too forward to help itself from the bread and milk. But let him ask his mother on her return, Where have you been, and what shops did you go to, and whom did you see there ? — questions of bare unprofitable fact, and he will probably be fooled to the top of his bent, — indulged, encouraged, and flattered. Now, this is bad and *mischievious* ; for, observe the consequences of it. The

child is driven to learn every thing from books, those honest but unsympathizing instructors,—distasteful, and uninformative upon points of doubt and difficulty, and therefore unsatisfactory,—while he can never hope to learn any thing from conversation,—nothing that is worth the knowledge,—and so is barred from the most natural and easiest beyond comparison, and most genial method of acquisition. I read very recently, I think in a penny magazine, of a little girl belonging to a free school, who was asked by one of the governors, on a public day, how such and such a thing happened to be so? She could give no answer. Her interrogator gave her the clew, and, with his assistance, she went through the account from point to point, and came to the right conclusion. “But how is it that you could not tell me at first; I thought you learned all these things regularly?” “O, yes, Sir,” replied the child, “I had learned it before, and often, but I never knew it till now.” She was right, as right as reason itself, not indeed logically, but instinctively, and therefore more surely; knowledge is conscious truth, but learning, as we get it and possess it, is often neither truth nor consciousness.

But time grows short and my subject lengthens; I have been already too much on these matters. To bring their diffuseness to a point, and so have done with them, I would recommend to every teacher one thing above all others,—to do their utmost to dismiss their disciples as nearly as may be in the condition so admirably figured forth in the Greek line. I cannot quote the original. I dare not take upon me so much of the pedant. My reputation is unequal to bear up against such a weight; but I will give it you in English:—

“Dismiss them pleased,—
Pleased and instructed too.”

Such a disposition is genuine diligence in the only true

sense of the word. *Diligentia a diligendo*, — the choice of affection, — the kindly prosecution of a study congenial to us. Whereas, as we usurp the word in common currency, in loose popular talk, a diligent man is a mere plodder. An attorney's copying-clerk, a treadmill-goer, a London scavenger, a washer of foul linen, a formal, technical schoolmaster, might each of them, in the common acceptation, be called diligent in his vocation. But the truth is far otherwise. Diligence, so far from being a mere vulgar mechanical virtue, should be gifted at once with the red cap, — should have its place among the cardinals. It is as much the life and soul of success in studious and intellectual pursuits, as the glorious all-seeing and all-animating sun is the soul of vegetative virtue ; and how then are we to make it our ally in the work before us ? Simply by so ordering it that discipline to the pupil shall seem an amusement, and his amusement be really his discipline. For this purpose we must correct the common chill of the literary atmosphere, in order that the young soul, as often as it peeps from its hiding-place, may be lured by the genial and growing warmth to come abroad and take pleasure in its exercise. And for thus raising the temperature, there is nothing like the spirit of conversation, if it proceed from a full, kindly mind, and be rightly applied and conducted. Conversation to the boy is, or may be, a course of experiment on his ideas ; and experiment, as I have said before, whether by conversation or actual practice, or meditation only, is the best quickener of the faculties. But the last mentioned is too abstruse for a child, and indeed utterly impracticable to him. We must resort then to the two former, and use them by way of inducement to the last and most perfect method. We must encourage the mind to come forth, albeit arrayed most beggarly, and prove its acquaintance with any subject, by discussing, not in

set terms, but freely and in friendly guise, the points involved in it. We must descend to a common level with our pupil, and so become children again in the simplicity and playfulness, although we be always men in the effective force, of intellect. This we must do, and redo, and, as nearly as we can, overdo. We must take the recommendation of Horace : —

“ *Hoc primum repetas opus; hoc postremus omittas.*”

CHAPTER IV.

“ *Sic enim est faciendum, ut contra universam naturam nihil contendamus, eā tamen conservatā propriam naturam sectemur.*” — CICERO.

HERE, then, was the principle of a new and a most important power, a lever, if it were only rightly applied and regularly worked, forcible enough in itself to move and master the whole mass of human knowledge. I was far indeed from making the utmost of it, but I was also as far from neglecting it altogether, and leaving it to lie by idly and uselessly, in a dark corner of my mind. I was conscious, to a certain degree, of my own force, and that consciousness, as will often be the case, gave me a confidence even more effective and valuable than the actual force whence that confidence took its rise.

Moreover, as I felt the growing strength of my faculties, I felt also, in like proportion, a growing pleasure in their exercise. The regenerative process was going on. I was becoming recreate. I felt at the close of almost every month that I was another being than I had been at its commencement.

I was conscious of my own advancement. I had learned by this time to behold myself in the mirror of

reflection. I felt the development within me as sensibly as I ever felt the acquisition of any other faculty ; as fully as one may feel the swell of one's spirits from the influences of poetry or devotion ; and as joyously as we have all felt their exuberance from the pleasures of conviviality, of animating discussion, or of an agreeable woman's society.

One of the first indications of this new state was the faculty of comprehending what I read, not merely piece-meal, but as a whole. Formerly, when I had to get up an ode of Horace, or a satire of Juvenal, though I could translate it word for word, and knew perfectly well the meaning of each separate sentence, yet I had no eye for the entire subject. I could not make out its scope and general structure. I was unable to take a bird's-eye view of it, and therefore, as for its general unison and harmony of design, I had no more notion of it than a bee has of the architecture of a house while it is travelling on from one brick to another. Indeed, the thought never occurred to me. I knew not what I wanted, and consequently was at no pains to make the acquisition. If, indeed, the subject happened to involve a story, as in Ovid's Metamorphoses, the Greek or Latin fables, and many other books, there of course my interest and intelligence kept pace with the narrative, and went along with it, *secundo flumine* ; otherwise, whenever the connection was one of sentiment merely, and not of incident or fact, where, in short, it was speculative, it was lost to me altogether.

"The body's harmony, the beaming whole,"

to use the words of Pope, was a thing that my survey was too narrow to comprehend. My power of intellect was as an invading force, which is master of no more ground than it actually occupies for the moment.

I well remember the time when the mist was dissipated from before my eyes, when this sort of mental shortsightedness enlarged itself into a wider range of vision. I was then in the lower division, poring over an ode of Horace in one of our summer evening conclaves. It was the "*Tyrrhena regum*," a rambling and diffuse, though spirited composition, and one hardly to be compassed by a child's grasp. I happened to take it into my head, from what impulse I know not, to run over it lightly with my eye from the first to the last stanza. This I was enabled to do readily from my previous acquaintance with it, having frequently before gone through the ode and become familiar with its separate portions, though my mind had not hitherto been capacious enough to regard it in its unity. While I was thus engaged, the light struck me. I found that I could comprehend not only the meaning of every particular stanza, but the relation of each to each, and the bearing of the whole. This was like a new sense to me. I was surprised at the discovery,—so much so that I lifted my eyes from my book, and looked around me as though I had seen, or expected to see, a vision. But no, the effect was a real one, and no way imaginary. I felt strangely affected, as if I had undergone some mental process. Perhaps it might have been so; doubtless, indeed, it was. I had risen in the scale; I belonged, thenceforth, to a higher class of intellectual beings. That simple act of comprehension, or comprehensiveness, for it is an active faculty, had enlarged and expanded my capacity.

I know not how it should be, but almost all the active powers of my mind have come upon me thus suddenly, like the moment of grace so fondly cherished, and so emphatically accredited, by certain religionists. Consideration, which I put, arbitrarily, perhaps, for the

meditation of ideas suggested from without, — by books, for instance, or conversation ; thought, or that nobler faculty of the mind whereby it acts upon the images raised up by it for itself, and from its own depths, — the comprehensiveness that I have just spoken of ; these, with other intellectual and some even physical faculties, — that of swimming, for example, of shooting, and one or two more, — have stood at once confessed to me, like the hero from the clouds, for my use and service, after weeks, and months, and even years of blind, groping, unsatisfactory experiment. To give one proof of it from among many. I remember well when I was first set down to scan Latin verses. For a while, I had no notion of the way to do it ; I was perplexed and bewildered beyond measure. I might fancy now and then that I had caught a glimpse of what I was looking for, but it was only to be thrown back again immediately into a still more hopeless state of darkness. I was in despair a hundred times ; I thought that there would be no end of my trouble and my vexation. Suddenly, like a person removed from broad daylight into a half-darkened room, my sight began to accustom itself to the atmosphere surrounding it. I was able to distinguish objects, to see what I was about, to make something of the task enjoined to me. From the void and darkness that was before, the scene resolved itself into order, clearness, and easy adaptability. So in twenty other cases that I could enumerate, if need were ; but a single instance is enough to suggest to every reader what must already be familiar to him.

Now, this is a remarkable fact, this suddenness of advent, this quick proselytism of the intellect, and one that deserves much consideration, though I am not aware that it has hitherto been distinguished by any whatever. The *nature of the mind we know not, neither the way of its*

working ; therefore, to endeavour to trace them, either in this or in any other of its processes, thorough and absolutely, would be a hopeless thing ; but though there can be no demonstration, there are analogies, nevertheless, that may serve us, at least for illustration ; — suppose that we try one or two of them, and ascertain, as far as may be, whither they will lead us.

Reader, you have observed the gathering of the thunder-storm ; the ferment of the atmosphere, and, anon, its brooding silence ; the landscape overcast ; the day darkened ; the fowls of the air cowering, and the beasts of the field agaze in fearful circumspection. Nature frightened from her propriety, and, throughout her universal self, ill at ease, untoward, and fretful. The clouds are hurrying to and fro, — now they subside and sink ; they are mixed in the mass, — but there they settle not ; the active elements, the fire and light involved in them, agitate the whole body, speeding throughout it in search of each other, and falling together at last by the force of mutual attraction. Then comes the consummation. The darkness is dissipated by a flash, — in a moment the lightning shines from one part of the heavens even unto the other. Much like this, in all but the momentary quality, is the process of mental enlightenment as I have often felt it. For a while, when we begin to brood upon a subject, the elements of our intelligence appear to be enveloped in a cloud. For a while, also, that cloud, the more it is agitated and stirred, the more troubled and darker it becomes. But we have only to await our time in patience, — to let the process go on, — in a word, to think perseveringly ; and as the spirit is stirred, the scattered elements of light will assuredly fall into one, and throw their lustre at last over the whole subject. *Out of darkness comes the dayspring* ; or, as it is in *the heathen genealogy*, — from Erebus came chaos and

night, but out of night the day, with all its brightness, was begotten.

Again, reader, if you be a domestic man, fond of the delights, and withal subject to the miseries, of "hearth and home," you will often have witnessed the phenomenon of a fire smouldering and slumbering amid a heap of cinders. For a time it makes no progress, it dwells in darkness and discomfort. One would suppose it to have made up its mind for its extinction, and to be awaiting its last moment in the decency of composure, enveloped in the cloak of its lugubriousness, like the old Roman. But judge not so, lest you judge too hastily. The mass around has been penetrated by the heat, not indeed observably, but yet perceptibly. They are prepared for their function. The fire has been long blending itself within them, and is ready to burst out into a flame at the first happy conjuncture. Stir them once more, clear them for the draught, — touch them but once, and at any one point, with a living fire, and the whole will break forth into conflagration.

The fact is, that the mind, on its introduction to a new sphere of knowledge, is busied with objects only. It is perplexed by their multiplicity, — dazzled by their variable novelty, — hurried from one thing to another, and has no leisure to take any thing home to its consideration. As the nurse would say of a child in arms, it takes no notice. It sees indeed the objects presented to it, — it sees them even too vividly, — it is struck by them, — its sense is so much taken by mere outward forms, that there is no attention left for properties and relations. Now, it is pretty clear that the knowledge of relations, and not that of facts, is, after all, the only real knowledge. It signifies nothing to know that gold is gold, or iron, iron, unless we have a notion of the *connections and dependencies* of these things on others.

People of intellectual experience are, of course, well aware of this. They know that they can gain little or nothing by laying up a load of facts in the memory, unless they refer those facts to principles, and generalize them, more or less exactly, into systems. Accordingly, when they enter upon a course of study, they make this their chief point ; they learn particulars, not for their own sakes, but with a view to such general intelligence. And thus it is that they make great progress in a short time. Instead of wandering and groping about, and losing their way, they have had their eye upon their object from the first moment that they started.

But with the child it is far otherwise. He will pore over a book by the year together, simply because he is told to do so, and never know nor care wherefore. He has heaped up a multitude of words, and dates, and things — no, not things, but facts—in his poor head ; but of their significance one towards the other, their principles, or the inferences to be drawn from them, he has not the smallest notion. In other words, he has never observed their relations, and far less studied them. He has not begun to take notice. If, then, he were to rest there, and make no further advance, all those facts, those brute materials of knowledge, would be mere lumber on his brain. They would be of no more use to him than a foreign vocabulary, if he were to get it up in his memory without understanding a single word of it.

But this can hardly ever be. Though he has no notion of settling himself actively to work to make out the relations of things, yet, after a long period of darkness, a period lengthened by abuse far beyond the measure of necessity, he does at last come to understand something about them by the mere force of habit. This *said habit* it is that serves him ; not, indeed, in the same degree, but in the same kind, as reason does the expe-

rienced intellect. It is itself a sort of vulgar, gross, concrete reason, — or unreason, as the case may be, — but, however, it is well enough on the whole for most practical purposes ; though, of course, as being the result only of long experience, it is a thing of late growth, and, compared with the active reasoning faculty itself, it is about as unsatisfactory a guide in the way of intellect as the stick of a blind man compared with the eyes of his clear-sighted fellow-traveller.

Gradually, then, through this obscure medium, the boy becomes familiar with things of most ordinary use in his course of scholarship. He ceases to be struck by their appearances, — he scarcely regards them as to form, — he has begun, though perhaps unconsciously, to understand them. He knows them not rationally, but habitually. Still, however, he does know them. He is in a sort of twilight of the intellect. The source of his intelligence is hidden from him ; he is unable to point it out ; his sun of reason is as yet below the horizon, — but it foreshows its coming, — it has given tokens of itself by a light, however faint, yet such as enables him to view objects and *their relations*, not, indeed, distinctly, but generally, and in the gross. This is knowledge, though by no means of the highest order, or highest genealogy. It is, moreover, his first mode of knowledge as a scholar. The consciousness of his new faculty is a surprise upon him. He cannot understand how he has come to see so clearly things that only a few weeks before were strange to his comprehension. He wonders at himself and his own power as I did on the occasions above mentioned. So it is with us all. Drop by drop the cup is filled, till it is full to an overflow. By continued friction the heat is raised, one degree after another, till it bursts out into a flame. Word by word, lesson by lesson, *the experience of the scholar grows into his ha-*

bitual knowledge. The process is long, but the result, as in my case, will often be quick and sudden.

I have made a long story of it, a story almost without an end, but not, as I am well assured, without a moral ; and what may that moral be ? Simply this, — never despair. *Conanti nihil arduum.* However low you may stand in the intellectual scale, be satisfied that it depends but upon yourself to raise yourself to a high rank, if not to the very highest one. You may be long in darkness, — you may feel yourself awhile to be incapable of original thought, — but herein you are no worse off than are your neighbours. They were all in the same predicament until they had wrought out their capacity for themselves. What I say to one I say to all. Do but read and meditate ; and if you only persist in the experiment, you will infallibly, in spite of yourself, become a great man. You will have difficulties, severe difficulties, to encounter ; but, if you take to your heart, as you well may, the assurance that you must vanquish them at last, your toil will be a true pleasure, — your contest an exquisite and prolonged delight. And what though the night be lengthened to your expectation ? the dawn will surely appear to him who has patience to await it, and to dwell steadily upon his purpose. Then is the time of glorification ; yes, I repeat it, then comes the glorification of the intellect. For the angelic nature is not higher raised above the human than is the nature of the thoughtful mind above that of the unthinking one. Therefore endeavour this ; press forward to your calling, not anxiously, for anxiety in things of the mind must ever defeat its purpose, but hopefully and strenuously. Go on in your studies, “*continuè addiscens,*” and, what is more important still, continually exercising yourself on what you have learned. Bestir yourself vigorously ; be active, and unsailing. In a word, agitate, agitate, agitate. As

an intellectual nostrum this is of admirable virtue, whatever it may be as a political one. The waters must be stirred ere the virtue from on high can descend upon them. Above all, away with the cabalistic nonsense of the prerogative of genius, the predominance of the natal star. If the plea of inability to rise above his nature is good for the dunce, it is good for the knave also. For any thing that I can see, we can control our intelligence as well within a very little, as we can our morality. For myself I declare solemnly, and I will say it for the comfort of self-condemned dunces, that if I were to begin life anew without any other experience than the certainty, such as I now hold it, of intellectual quasi-perfectibility, I would choose to begin it as a dunce rather than as a boy of genius. The certainty that I have spoken of would sustain me, and animate me, and nerve me in my endeavours to improve myself from the lowest to the highest rank, and I should have all the pleasure of the pursuit, — an inestimable pleasure, indeed, in such a region, — together with the conscious anticipation of success, the assurance of the crowning glory.

To return to my narrative. It will be supposed, from the sketch that I have given of my particular turn of mind, that I was but ill adapted for the habits of ordinary acquaintance. My bias was too decided, — too much against the course of fashion. I was an unconventional being, — too independent and too original, if I may use a convenient, though not strictly legitimate word, for the compliances of vulgar companionship. The fact is, that mere acquaintances are most easily and most readily formed between persons of no very marked character, — that is between persons indeed, — persons in the proper sense, — mere masks, artificial, conventional things, — smoothed and rounded like a marble, offering no hold of *themselves*, and *only* a single point of contact, that is to

say, the one of *convenience*, and well *calculated* therefore to roll together, side by side, along the common highway, the “hackneyed path of men,” until some obstruction or other may happen to sever their society. But for me, I was not so characterless. I had lived too much by myself, I was too full of my own fancies, to be a proper subject for reduction to the common standard. There was an impulse from within that would often carry me wide away from the track and custom of my fellows. These stirrings of incipient thought, or whatever else it was that bore its semblance, threw me into the trick of singularity,—into strange unsocial habits, as it generally does in the case of a boy unused, as he must long be, to the workings of his own mind, and therefore unable to control them properly. I was like a young greyhound, sprawling, uncouth, and lumbersome, from my early development, and therefore, if there be any truth in the sportsman’s tradition, of so much the greater promise. I do not say this in the spirit of vanity, or by way of self-commendation ; far from it ; on the contrary, the truth, if it be one, or, at all events, the belief of it, is to me a matter only of remorse and mortification. The promise is now very unlikely to pass into fulfilment. The prognostication has been most lamentably belied by the experience of my after life. Of a truth I may say my days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. Much that is done in me has been done for me ; and what should have been done by me has been in a great measure left undone. Here I stand, the creature of circumstances, the poor base almsman of contingencies. Little is it that I have effected for myself,—never have I had the strength fully to work out my own intellectual livelihood ; and then, forsooth, to be vain with such a vanity as this ! The prodigal, while

feeding upon husks, might as reasonably have been vain of the money that he had lavished among harlots.

But, however this may be, such as I have just described it was my real character. I was full of angularities. My frame, my moral frame, that is, appeared to be made up of elbows, stuck full of salient points, though not perhaps of the most offensive quality. Now this is a disposition very unfavorable, as I have said at length, to the formation and maintenance of common acquaintances ; but yet, methinks, rather auxiliary than otherwise to the conjunction of minds in thorough and strong friendship. It presents a hold, — it gives us something to catch at, — it is not perpetually repelling, or rather eluding us, by an unmeaning superficial smoothness. A pair of minds made up each of them of distinct individual points may close into each other as thoroughly as a pair of brushes. To people who would merely lounge along, side by side, these saliences are sorely annoying, they are abominable things ; but to those who are for a more strict alliance, who would walk arm in arm together, they are of eminent convenience. I was then, if this be true, by no means ill-fitted for a friend, either to receive offices of friendship or to impart them ; but where was I to find one ? how was I to spend my faculty ? There was the question. With all my originality I was of a spirit reserved and self-retiring ; not as some few boys are, eccentric and bold withal, or, as the French express it, *étourdi*. These are the happy fellows, the universal favorites, the kings among their coevals. They enjoy the mirth that they excite. Their philosophy is of the laughing kind, full of laughter to repletion in itself, and therefore a non-recipient of it, insensible of its impressions from without. What would be ridicule against others is only raillery towards them. Their humor is strong enough, and self-confiding enough, to grasp the nettle of sarcasm, and

compress by the mere force of hardihood the thousand little envenomed points so painful to the less determined disposition. Command me to such fellows ; and let the audacious humor of their eccentricity command them, as it often does, to after eminence.

For myself, I had nothing of this faculty belonging to me. The consequence was that few of my fellows understood me, or appreciated me, or liked me with any heartiness of liking. I wanted a friend. My want, in the schoolboy's phrase, was long my master, and I suffered under it most lamentably. The difficulty of intellectual progress in such a default of communicative confidence I have before faintly set forth, or rather shadowed ; but now it was stronger and more painful to me than at the former time. It is with the union of minds as with that of sexes. As they grow towards fulness, they desire to impart one to another, to communicate their properties and functions. I felt this desire, but for a long time I felt it as preying upon itself. I was destined, like Plato's imaginary soul, to wander about for a season, and seek vainly and disconsolately for my fellow.

At length I was successful. I found myself a friend, or rather I found him as a companion, and made him into a friend afterwards. My foundling was a boy of about my own age, and nearly the same station in the school. We had grown up for years in neighbourhood, and of course in the occasional practice of communication, but not of such a kind as to beget any thing like confidence. We had never been so thrown together as to feel our mutual adaptability. But the season came duly. One morning I happened to go into his room to confer with him about the borrowing of a book, or some such slight matter. I suppose that we were both in the humor of sympathy, for we seemed, I remember it well, to enter, *as by instinct*, into one another's feeling, and parted, after

a long talk arising out of nothing, with a mutual and thorough good intelligence. From that moment we were united as strictly for a time as though the destinies had tied the knot. There was indeed a dissimilarity in our dispositions, but no matter. The work that is cross-woven is all the firmer and faster for it. In friendship, as in love, to be akin, to be come of the same kind, is a motive of indifference rather than of affection. Sameness is monotony, — and of all people in the world those without any elements of mutual contrast are the most incompatible. The most of us are weary of ourselves ; we would fain flee from our own image ; and to have our likeness in the person of a companion constantly thrust upon us is a sufferance of sheer disgust. Original people are never alike ; and they who lack originality are seldom well at ease together, unless haply when in a sound sleep. To conclude in the fashion of Mr. Hood, and so put my sententious wisdom to flight by a bad pun, I will pledge my word for it, that persons who are unlike in every thing else are like to be agreeable companions for that very reason.

But to the points of difference. My new friend was a student, and I was a reputed idler. He was trim and methodical ; I loose, careless, and irregular. His mind was almost all scholarship, while mine was principally made up of imagination. I had the greater share of sensibility, and he incomparably more talent ; or, in other words, more power and readiness of execution. He was neat almost to an excess ; and what Shakspeare calls “point device in his accoutrements,” a “Count Confect” ; whereas I had never known any other use of my clothes than the first and most necessary one, that of a defence from weather. Nevertheless our friendship took root and flourished ; day by day we were joined in a *closer and more entire intimacy.*

The fact is, that though we were widely apart in almost every thing else, we were yet congenial from one cause, and that an all-sufficient one. We had both of us some little qualification of taste. We had the sentiment of what was elegant, and noble, and beautiful, whether in books or nature. This was the language whereby we understood each other in our hearts,—the chord of sympathy,—the point of union, wherein all our other differences terminated. It may seem but a slight influence, and yet it was enough to fill with gladness many a long hour of our rural communings. It was enough singly and in itself; it needed nothing more to make up the complement. Witness its dear, delightful recollection. Not a green lane, not a village footpath, not a brook or river-side within five miles of us, but was conscious of our wanderings. Meadows of Datchet, and ye, castled heights of Windsor, recesses of the dark forest, and winding majesty of the river! I call you to witness of what you know,—truly and gratefully I invoke you. How often have we gazed in admiration at these and a thousand other scenes, as they were commended to our perceptions by the quickening influence and through the glowing atmosphere of friendship. Our school-fellows knew not of our enjoyment; they were as strange to it as I am at this day to any ghostly mystery. At the moment of their release they were off, each as his humor took him,—the multitude of them “up town,” and the rest as widely spread, and as busy withal, as a swarm of bees,—cricket or football, shooting or boating, or the more ambitious pastimes, coveted because strictly forbidden, of billiards, riding, or tandem-driving. These for the rest; for us two, we were contented with our own thoughts and imaginings, wild, albeit, and puerile, yet warm and sprightly, and savoring of the heart. We canvassed all that we knew, and much that we had as yet

only dreamt of ; unity of subject was an abomination to us. Home scenes and stories, the character of our masters and associates, the subjects for our composition of the week, dogs and horses, history, romance, and poetry, — such was our amusement, —

“Votum, timor, ira, voluptas
Gaudia, discursus, nostri farrago libelli.”

This was a gracious change for me. Happiness, the proverb tells us, is born a twin, and I confess that I never yet knew the man that could enjoy it singly. When, indeed, by meditation or otherwise, the spirit is refined to the sincere feeling of devotion, — when the soul has brought itself to regard its God as its one friend, then of course it can need no other. It can enjoy the communion of its fellow-creatures as much as ever, but can never feel the want of it. But the ascent is only by degrees. Our affection, before it can soar to God, must exercise itself in its yearnings towards mere human friendship. It must rise upon the creature. This is the beginning of our happiness, the rudiment of our perfection. “Go not alone,” says the Scripture, “lest that haply you fall, and there be none to raise you up.” The danger of the fall is problematical ; but, on the faith of all experience, if we forego the comfort of such society, we shall at least droop most lamentably.

I have said, some pages back, that I felt the lack of friendship most painfully, in my general discouragement, self-weariness, and other tokens, and I now felt its presence as agreeably, by symptoms the contrary of all these. It was indeed a light in darkness to me. Literary continence, they say, of all kinds of continence, is the most distressing, and the most strongly against the course of nature ; change but a word, substitute mental for literary, and I will adopt the maxim to its last letter. All that a man wants, as far as his mental ease is concerned, is to

communicate ideas, — to give and take, — to throw off, whether in a continuous stream of light, or in the way of mere sparkling heedlessness, the fire that must otherwise smoulder in the “forge and working-house of thought.” This may be done by conversation, at least as well, and often far better, than by literary composition ; and by meditation, perhaps, best of all, — only let it be done. If the mind, in the words of Scripture, be left to settle upon its lees, all hope of it, or wellnigh all, is gone. What is it that makes the charm of London, and Paris, and Berlin to men of science, or literature, or conversational power, — to such men as care, for the most part, little or nothing for the splendors and gayeties of those great capitals ? What is it but the consciousness that they are each of them a kind of reservoir, where talents of all sorts may flow in and mingle together, and be applied afterwards usefully and actively, as occasion may serve, or need be ? Conversation is the current of the mind, the motive force of its elements. To young people, especially, while they are yet short of the faculty of meditation, it is the best substitute for it. They can no more be sure of their ideas unless they repeat them than they can be sure of their lessons unless they recite them from their memory. Activity is the essence of intellect. Exhalation, no less than inhalation itself, is necessary to vital energy. This desire to communicate is a want that we all feel, — a want suggested to us not so much by reason as by instinct. The wish to exhibit what he has learned is as natural to the boy as the same sort of eagerness is to the puppy, — the eagerness to bring back the glove or stick that it has been ordered to seek out by its master. Hence the joy, the warmth, the alacrity ; all the qualities, in short, that go to compose the true intellectual temper, — the temper, that is, of diligence, or of *fondness* for study (to translate the word meaningly), and

of glowing servor. But conversation is a tree that puts forth its best and highest-flavored fruits from the soil of friendship ; and the boy therefore should be at least as solicitous to keep up his stock of friendship as to increase that of book-learning. Unfortunately this is a truth much less regarded than it ought to be by parents and tutors, and all those placed in authority over young people. If a boy does but plod on from one book to another, they are too apt to fancy that it is enough ; whereas he may know little or nothing of Homer, Plutarch, or Cicero, and, perhaps, be none the worse ; whereas, if he know not a friend, if he have no familiar to cheer and comfort his feebleness, woe betide him ! And how easy, if we would but exert ourselves, is the practical essay of this principle ! At Eton, for instance, if boys, instead of being thrown into a room, like slaves into a ship, chance-medley, were associated according to their mutual adaptation and the discretion of their dame or tutor, — a discretion, of course, not strict and arbitrary, but large, gentle, and conciliating, — how good would it not be ! How delightful for two such youngsters to dwell together as brethren in unity, to aid each other in their spiritual ascent by mutual help and encouragement, and so to grow up in amity, instead of dragging each his fellow down the hill, as it happens but too often, from their snarling and fractious quarrelsomeness. This is one of the many points of education that are neglected, in spite of their great moment, only because they are obvious, and easily applied. For, indeed, as to its truth and applicability, I presume there can be no question about it. Can it be supposed that a boy is not more likely to take his mental coloring, aye, and character too, from his daily and hourly associates, — his familiar inmates, — from those, in short, to whose congenial influences the flower of his *mind uses and loves to expand itself*, — than from

his tutors and schoolmasters, his cloud-compelling thunderers, at whose presence that same flower shrinks and contracts itself with instinctive aversion? Besides, is there ever another workman but the schoolmaster, who does not take care to see, as often as he has a work in hand, that the tools intended by him for its execution will act together, and that no part of the movement is likely to interfere with any other? This is a mere hint; but, such as it is, I commend it to those whom it may concern, with all earnestness of humility. I have offered it, and so discharged my function; it is for them to dwell upon it, if they be so pleased, and improve it to its full practical development.

Well, then, we journeyed on in this way, my young friend and myself, for a year and a half, or thereabouts; and seldom has so much happiness been compassed in so little space. Companionship, they say, eases the wayfarer of half his burden, and verily at this time my soul was lightened by it:

“No more alone through the world’s wilderness,
Drooping of heart, albeit of high intent,
I journeyed on,—no more companionless
Where solitude is like despair, I went.”

Whatever we failed of happiness, it was our own fault. So, indeed, it is with us all, at all times, and in all cases; but then, living and feeling as we did, we should have found it difficult to devise even a pretext for wretchedness. We were both above our work,—wiser in mere scholarship than our years,—higher than our school station. Consequently, our cares were our pleasures,—our studies our enjoyments,—our discipline the salt and seasoning of our liberty. We had just arrived, too, at that delightful mental era, that springtide of the intellect, when the eye of the mind is awakened, when the glorious *creation* begins to dawn upon it, and interest, admiration,

and rapture to take place of loutish indifference. More than all, the rapid and frequent communication of our ideas had raised our spirits to a glow that diffused itself through our whole being, and fed, like fire, with a glad and eager appetite, on every thing presented to it. Scarce a subject so poor but, in our happy disposition, had some interest for us. The fact is, that, in whatever we undertake, and more especially in the labors of the student, the life and soul of success is always in the cheerfulness and elasticity of the spirit. It is in the sunshine of the heart that the fruits of the intellect must ripen and be mellowed. For this end the affections should be exercised, and cultivated, and improved no less studiously nor assiduously than any of the mental or bodily faculties ; and not only for this end, but for their own sake also, inasmuch as this same exercise of the affections has been ordained by Providence to be the surest, as it is also the simplest and kindliest, mean of all human happiness. Here is another strange oversight, a fatal error, rather, of ordinary education. We give ourselves mighty pains to teach our children what we fancy they ought to know, but as for what they certainly ought to feel, we leave it in the main to chance, and habit, and the evil communications of the world, to lend them their accomplishment ; and yet the sources of the heart lie not so deep ; they are less hidden from us, and, withal, far more manageable and irrigable, and of more genial influence, than those of the intellect.

We may rest assured, then, that the mist, and fog, and cloudiness of the spirit must be dissipated before its light can shine forth with its proper gladness, and warmth, and efficacy, and that the student who toils on moodily and despondingly, as he is unhappy in his means, will assuredly be so in his end likewise. This truth, or rather the *truth of the reverse proposition*, I then found. The

warmth of sociality cheered, and gladdened, and rarefied to buoyancy my spiritual atmosphere. It did more; it cleared also and brightened that atmosphere to a lucid transparency, and so enabled me to discover through it objects and relations that I could never have despaired through the despondency of my solitary studies. I became quick to imagine and apprehend, — I was full of alacrity, — I felt as if I had wings to fly. Every time we met, my little friend and I, it was in the anticipation, and that, too, issuing from our experience, of pleasure in each other's society ; and that very anticipation went far, as it usually does, to realize itself. We met in the humor to be pleased, and pleased therefore we were, almost invariably. We had once been rivals, but our rivalry was lost and drowned in the overflow of our confidence and sympathy. E—, as I have mentioned, was a more exact scholar than myself. On more than one occasion our head master, when we were up, as the phrase is, before him, had in vain sought satisfaction from me on some point of grammar, and upon my silence had referred the question to my friend, who was ready at once with the right answer. This happened repeatedly, and indeed so often, that at last the said master hinted to me, by no means obscurely, that, unless I mended my scholarship, E—, who stood below me in the school, must be put above my head. This was a thundering blow, a thorn in the side of my vanity, and, yet more and worse, a mortification to my pride. The whole host of envy, hatred, and uncharitableness came trooping in upon me. I am not ashamed to avow it ; indeed, I take a pride in the record. I was subject to the full force of those infirmities, as every boy is, and every man must be until religion shall have purged his nature of its original sin. Such was my being as a boy ; but now, as God has

vouchsafed to give me grace, I trust, through him, that I have in a measure mastered them.

This for the time was a sore smart. I was lowered in the estimation of my fellows. The feather was taken from my cap. My rival was set, as he deserved to be, in preëminence over me ; but then came the balm of friendship, and conciliated every thing, even such a rankling wound as this, to its own kindly nature. We lost sight of differences and comparisons ; like the Christians of old, we had and enjoyed every thing in common ; all our stores, I mean, of memory, and imagination, and studentship. Such reciprocation of ideas is like the reciprocation of other good and friendly offices ; it is doubly blessed, blessed both in the giver and taker ; it warms the mind by the very process of transmission ; it doubles the quantity, and improves the quality, of the intellectual wealth of its parties. To be sure, we were wanting in many of the requisites of friendship ; we had no strength of character, and but little depth of sentiment. We had not comprehension enough, nor discernment, to generalize our subjects on the one hand, nor to sift them thoroughly on the other ; the truest pleasures, therefore, of conversation were lost to us ; our talk was superficial and volatile. It went off, for the most part, in foam and sparkling ; but it cheered, and animated, and interested us ; and there was the great point gained.

But it must not be supposed that we were content to tell our friendship out, and talk it out, in this fashion, or that it had no other resources. Friendship, among boys particularly, cannot, any more than other things, be fed on essences, except always the essence of devotion ; but, in general, it requires its spiritual diet to be interchanged with a mixture of gross and substantial matters ; of these we had good store, — cricketing, boating, and football, *fives* and *brook-leaping* ; in all these pastimes, and twenty

others to diversify them, we could indulge ourselves *ad libitum*.

And thus we passed our time,—or rather our time passed us,—all unwitting as we were of its progress, gliding by us on its silken wings, and swelling minutes into days, and days into the huge period of years. In good pity this season was a brief one, but it was a brevity of entire happiness. We were happy in ourselves, happy in all around us ; in our boyish sports, our converse, our merriment, and our occasional communings, each by himself, with the retired Egeria of the mind,—the virgin meditation. This is the real happiness of friendship,—

“ Hoc est quod dicitur illud
Fraternum verè dulce sodalitium.”

Ay, and it is the perfection of friendship, too, when, as with us, it ministers not only to the gratification of the boy, the momentary joy of the heart, but to the improvement of the man, and the future development of his reason.

Happy had it been for us if this space could have been lengthened to a further blessedness of extension. But it was otherwise destined. Suddenly, without a sign to forebode the calamity, my friend was taken from school, and I left there to lament him. From that moment my soul was widowed ; she drooped awhile into despondency ; she clothed herself in darkness. But boyhood is the season of transition ; I had pains and pleasures, thoughts and imaginations innumerable, thronging about me. I dwelt not in the idea so long as to sink myself utterly in its enveloping gloom. Besides, I flattered myself that my grief was but for a season, that our friendly communings would be renewed ere long in freshness and variety, and in all loveliness of aspect. But hopes are fallacies. Disappointment is the only certainty of life. From that time to this a gulf has been fixed

between us, not indeed wide nor deep, nor any otherwise impassable, but yet it should seem of some magical difficulty, independent of all the vulgar forms of barrier-ship.

Since then thirteen long years have carried us on toward our graves in the silence of their procession ; and here I sit, spinning my silly brains into cobwebs of most fantastic flimsiness, while E—— hath devoted himself — whereto ? to religion shall I say ? Would it were so ! but I fear rather to the genial mother church, and all other the genialities of life and tendernesses domestic. But what then ? Whence and wherefore is our severance ? Are seventy odd miles, measured justly along the turnpike-road, an infinity of space, a distance utterly incompatible ? Are there not coaches and mails royal, and all other means and appliances of travelling expedition ? Are the Surrey hills as a cold Riphæan range, to check and chill the comings and goings of our friendship ? Are letters no longer things significant ? Has the postman conspired against us, or is that old accustomed regularity fallen into a traditional fable ? Is the rectory of —— an enchanted structure, girt all about with wizard influences, and therefore inaccessible ? Or, lastly, have I taken the gout for my familiar, and the palsy for the arbiter of my journeyings ? Surely no ; if I know myself aright, I trow not. But how, then, should so many long summers have passed over us, and still apart ? True, he has taken to himself a wife, and the thick-coming — alas ! not fancies, but chubby, gross realities of fatherhood, are fast gathering around him. But when a man marries, doth he divorce himself straightway from all those friendly offices that should be most consolatory to him in that his distress. Are wives and children of such precious rarity, or a true friend *a thing of so vulgar cheapness*, that they should

find favor in his sight before me? Marriage is an unfailing measure,—a thing of odious infinity, and oftentimes, withal, of infinite odiousness; and shall friendship, its one comforter, be less perdurable? To hold this for truth is to be no true philosopher. Away with such fool's fancies! Hitherto, for these last thirteen years past, the Turkish spell, the spell of fatalism, has been between us; but henceforth, as I am a true man, I forswear its efficacy. The weakness of my will shall no more lord it—O, the strangeness of such domination!—over my forceful potency. Come what else may, I will prove you ere the next summer is out whether you be yet yourself, or whether matrimony have made a dolt of you.

At the time that E—— left Eton I had nearly completed my fifteenth year. Ere then I had acquired, as I well might, a certain faculty of viewing things in the abstract. I could ascend, not indeed always, but in some cases, from particulars to generals. I had just begun to venture “beyond the visible diurnal world” into the regions of opinion, the confines of metaphysical speculation. Sentiments and reflections, such as the appetite of the child in its cravingness for the seasoned novelty of facts is prone to nauseate and reject, began to find acceptance with me. I was master of sundry general notions, and of course was in the habit of abusing them most cruelly, with all the cruelty of boyishness.

It happened about this season that one or other of us had stumbled upon one of those numberless publications of the day condemnatory of the Eton system, or, as the authors would have it called, chance-medley, of education. Of course, no quarter was given us; black was the only color, and that was used most unsparingly, and spread over the whole canvass. To grasp at what the hand could hold and no more was ridiculed

as the fool's wisdom, and universality of attainment was recommended as the one thing needful. The versifying business above all brought the author's satirical vein into full flow, and we were represented as being brought up to no better purpose or higher offices than the brats of ballad-singers. This was poor, miserable, slanderous stuff to any body that could go deeper than the surface ; but on us, who could not, it told prodigiously. The adage is a true one, — *Quicquid recipitur, recipitur ad modum recipientis* ; and all these sayings were of course received by us according to the fashion of our childish intellects. We regarded the mental groundwork as a tesselated floor, presuming that, if it were patched up of a thousand different parts and forms and colors, it must needs as a whole combine all the excellences of all its component materials ; and that if, on the contrary, it were simple and entire in its structure, it could not fail therefore to be good for nothing. We argued as children, childishly ; and if we saw any thing practised, like versification for instance, that had no direct immediate use, we gave it up at once, and scorned it utterly, never dreaming that any thing could be made

“fungi vice cotis, acutum
Reddere qua^m ferrum valet, exsors ipsa secandi”;

and that a thing, itself of no primary use, might nevertheless have efficacy to call forth, and even to create, an infinity of the most useful agents and influences. We would fain, in short, be wiser than our fellows, and even than our teachers. We fancied it a fine thing to despise, off hand, what we took to be our “beggarly scraps” of knowledge. We had heard great things of philosophy ; and, by a blunder pardonable enough in boys, but despicable in grown men, we took philosophy to mean nothing more than the deposition of scientific facts *in the memory*. It was after this fashion that we

were ambitious to become philosophers ; but our project rested as yet in conception ; before it could be brought out to birth and carried into act, E—— left the school, and so we parted company.

When I returned to Eton after the Christmas holidays, and found that my friend was gone, no one could tell me why or wither, only that he was gone and would not return, I felt a strange bereavement. The surprise came upon me with the force of a stunning shock. I walked about like a ghost, as one may fancy it while revisiting a scene endeared to it by recollection, but where it has no concern either with the present or the future. Every thing else was there but the anticipated pressure of the hand, the cheerful voice, the hurried joyousness of the encounter, — these were wanting, — and, lacking these, the rest was but superfluous to me and importunate. I felt like a bird without its mate, looking around and wondering, — restless and untoward, moody, forlorn, and irresolute ; and, then, the cheerlessness of the season ; our amusements out of leaf ; cricket, foot-ball, boating, all in a state of suspended animation. What was to be done ? One evening after three o'clock school, before I had well settled to my new state, I went up to Ingleton's to idle away an hour among the books there, and so amuse my melancholy. One of the first volumes that I took up was an elementary treatise on algebra. This was a strange phenomenon ; for the worthy bookseller, on the principle of suiting his stock to the classical taste of his customers, rarely admitted to his shelves a representative of any one of the sciences. For myself I had heard algebra mightily extolled. I regarded it as one of the main branches of the tree of knowledge. I had worked up my mind to covet it, and there it was before me, as surely within my mind's grasp — so I fancied — *as the book itself was within the reach of my hand.* The

train had been laid, and a random spark like this could not fail to fire it. I got the treatise, put it in my pocket, and walked home, securing it all the way, as if it were full of notes from the bank, by the pressure of my hand, and making as much of it as the lawyer of his first brief, the cornet of his commission, or the young lady of her first love-letter.

As I went along, I passed one of my school-fellows, a boy of high talent and promise, which he has since fully realized. It will be presumed that with these conditions he must have been incomparably my superior, and so doubtless he was ; nevertheless, I, for my part, was vainglorious enough to consider him as a rival, and nothing more, — one with whom I could keep pace over any ground, and possibly even beat him at the run in. How well do I remember my feelings as I met him on that occasion ! My sense of self-exalted superiority, my fancy that I was about to endue myself with a kind of intellectual three-leagued boots, and so outstrip him on our common course easily and infallibly. The spirit of emulation within me was subdued to something like compassion. Poor fellow, I thought as he brushed by me, there he goes, destined all his life long to be a scholar and versifier, and nothing else ; and here am I on the high road to be a philosopher. Well, let him pass. Little does he think of the advantage that I have gained over him ; if he did, what would become of all his gayety ? Poor fellow, how crest-fallen he would be !

The same evening I set myself fairly to work, in the confidence that I should make my promise good. It was a grand undertaking ; and how did I think proper to enter upon it ? Poor little fool as I was, I took it for granted, in my simplicity, that one might get through a work in algebra at much the same rate as one could despatch a *Greek author* ; and with that presumption to comfort me,

I sat down. I glanced at the first page ; I could understand nothing. Still I abated no jot of my confidence, and passed on to another, as though I were lounging over a story-book. There again I was in darkness, — gross, utter, palpable darkness. I began to distrust myself. I got up, closed the book, and, attributing my failure to something that I should soon be able to explain, I made up my mind to return to it at a more convenient season. I did return to it again and again. My doubts grew into difficulties, my difficulties into perplexities, and my perplexities into despair, disgust, and self-despitefulness.

I need not make a long story of a very simple fact. There I was alone. No one by to advise me, — scarcely a boy in the whole school of any more experience in mathematics than myself. I knew nothing, by any regular knowledge, even of the simplest rules in arithmetic. And to attempt algebra ! the attempt, if I should persevere in it, could have but one result, that of driving me literally mad. In point of fact, I made no little progress towards this most enviable consummation. I had a great conceit of my own power. I fancied that I could do any thing and every thing that I would do. I had never read the lines of Pope, —

“ Full in the midst of Euclid dip at once,
And petrify a genius to a dunce.”

As for me, I had not the light of genius to illumine me, and therefore my darkness was absolute. At first I knew nothing of the necessity for preparation ; and afterwards, when I saw my error, I clung to it from a very fanaticism of pride and self-despite, disdaining to fall back and try a better method.

In this way, for ten days or a fortnight, I was in one continual martyrdom. I worked myself up to persist in my wrongheadedness, till I had exhausted my whole *force*, — spirit, patience, temper, and all, — and fretted

every nerve into rags. At last, in a fit of phrensy, I threw the book into the fire, stamping it down again and again, and raving and cursing as if under the restraint of a strait waistcoat.

The failure, with all its irritating and, as it chanced, disorganizing effects, was of course chargeable in the main on my own childish precipitancy. I was not at all more stupid than other boys, and if I had been only set in the proper train, the probability is that I should have gone as far and as readily as the bulk of them. Indeed, I have the actual proof of it ; years after, I took with me into the country an elementary work on the same subject, and was surprised at the ease and rapidity of my progress. However, even if my method had been a rational one, if the ablest heads and experiences had been there to aid me, I doubt if I should have been the better for it ; I might even have been the worse. I should have made way, doubtless, but in the wrong direction. It was too early a day for the endeavour. We should do well in our intellectual processes to apply the lesson given us by Nature in the method of our bodily organization. While we are yet young, it is the force of expansion, and not that of condensation, that is strongest upon us. We are loose and awkward upon all points. It is only as we advance to manhood, when the complement of our bulk is wellnigh made up, that we begin to get into frame. And so with the mind ; we should not attempt to set or fix it till we have replenished it well with information, and so reared it up to a certain measure of development.

But this, whether true or false, is mere theory. To leave it, then, and reassume my own proper person. Be the cause and manner of my failure what it might, I had failed most assuredly, and, as appearances were *for a long time, most mischievously*. My whole intel-

lectual frame was disconcerted, thrown out of joint, and almost broken up. And no wonder ; — like most other apostates, whether in politics, religion, or whatever else, I had not sufficiently calculated my game. I was disgusted, from a private fancy or pique, with my own party, and so deserted it ; but I had not taken my measures well. I had used no policy of forethought. I had not prepared the way for my thorough acceptance with those to whom I sought, by my traitorship, to recommend myself. I addressed myself to them, as if I had fancied that their communion was to be had cheap, — merely for the asking. I attempted to fall in with them pell-mell, and, of course, my fellowship was rejected. Here was a mortification to my vanity. There was another, and a no less deadly one, to my pride and self-opinion : I had heard and read many times of many great self-taught mathematicians, who had stumbled on their path, as I did, by mere accident in the first instance, but had followed it up afterwards of set purpose, steadily, successfully, and gloriously, though with no other guide than their own intellects to hold the light before them. How much they must have been above me ! What a mere dolt, a fool, an idiot, must I be, compared with such men ! These were my reflections, — the bitter cud that I would chew ; and there was nothing unnatural in them if we consider that the bitterness of disappointment is apt in its first moments to look simply to results, rather than to the causes and circumstances of them.

The consequence of all this was, that I fell between the two stools, and there I lay for a while inert and prostrate. I could not bring myself to fall back on my old studies, and pursue them quietly and contentedly. This was an effort far beyond the utmost stretch of my philosophy. Pride forbade it ; and, as to any further *courtship* of the severer Muses, — to wit, the mathemat-

ics,— I would sooner have put both my hands into a bag full of fanged vipers. I was at war with myself, dissatisfied with all about me, foiled, baffled, and perplexed ; brought to the very humor—the rank, irritating humor—of the skeptic.

In this disposition I threw myself clear out of my accustomed course of study. I stood by as a mere gazer, between scorn and heedlessness, and suffered every one that would to pass me in the race of scholarship. For school business, I got up my lessons just so far as to construe them, and no farther. I was no traveller out of the record. History, criticism, and all things else were by-matters to me ; if it were “not so nominated in the bond,” I took no heed of it. As to my exercises in composition, whatever it might be, prose or verse, I did my number ; supererogation was a thing as accursed to me in doctrine and practice as to any other good Protestant ; I came barely up to the statute line, and never transgressed it. I would sooner—such was my silly perverseness—have stopped short midway in an argument, harangue, or description.

My tutor, who was all kindness to me, and most zealous for my progress, could not fail to note my sudden change from alacrity and earnestness to utter apathy. He often questioned me about it. What did it mean ? He could not understand it, nor could I give any reasonable account of it. But his solicitude in my behalf, acting on my waywardness of that time, frustrated itself. I was such a thorough simpleton as to imagine that he was anxious not only for my advancement, but also for his own credit,—that he had a personal interest at stake ; and so, in the sheer spirit of contrariety, and by way of humoring my self-importance, I stood out stiffly against all the force of his admonitory friendliness. At last he

left me to my own devices, such as they were, neither very pleasant nor very profitable to me.

Things of business, duty, and custom are easily omitted ; but it is by no means so easy to bestow, to one's own satisfaction, the time that one should have employed in doing them. This was a difficulty to me, but, as I was then a boy, not an insuperable one. I made friends of our ordinary pastimes. At football there was none better. Cricket, too, I tried regularly and assiduously, but I could never make much of it. I could not come up to the free, gentlemanly, slashing style of the Eton play ; I was a mere stump-saver all my days. The captainship of the twenty-two was the highest point of my attainment. This was a little extraordinary, inasmuch as, at fives, the very pentathlon of the present day, as its name may be strained to import,—a game requiring for its accomplishment the utmost quickness of hand and eye, and every other qualification of the consummate cricketer,—I was captain of the wall ; no one there could reach me.

I have been thus full on the subject of boyish sports, because I think that their importance, as compared with mere learning, has been very much underrated. As to any grave dissertation upon such matters, I leave all the honor of it to such geniuses as Scriblerus ; but this I do hold, that there is but little hope of a sound intellect, unless the spirits be sustained and the health recruited by the indulgence of our natural inclination for active amusement. The "*mens sana in corpore sano*" is no idle nor arbitrary position of the poet. The former can hardly have "a local habitation," unless it be in the latter. Besides, the gamesome spirit, even if it should be no way conducive to learning, is at least, by its quickness, and energy, and apprehensive faculty, the best safeguard *against stupidity*, — that stupidity which is so often the

largest portion of your everlasting porers over books. It is true that some persons, debarred early and late by some natural infirmity from all such recreations, have nevertheless been prodigies of learning, but, in no case, I think, happy men; they have been strangers to that peace of mind which passeth all understanding. Their disease has generally grown and strengthened itself with their learning; each has acted and reacted upon the other, and their mental culture, instead of ending, as it should do, in a genial and pervading spirituality, has but too often closed its account in nervousness, hypochondria, and their melancholy train of attendants.

And, after all, the sportiveness of boyhood, the exuberance of the young spirit, why should it not as well be reviewed as our labors under the lash, our tasks of irksome compulsion and most odious memory? Is joy less amiable than repiningness, less pleasing in its presence, less lovely in its recollection? — or can it be that our moral atmosphere, when the meridian is past, and the day fast declining, is so full charged with genialities as that we can afford to dismiss from it, as things superfluous, all its reflected warmth and brilliancy, — the *lumen juvenae purpureum*, — the coloring of boyhood?

There may be some to whom this is wisdom; with me it is mere sullenness against nature. I am as solicitous to the full to keep up my stock of grateful recollections as my friend B —, that most vinous spirit, to replenish his failing bins (failing, yet never bankrupt) with the express richness of the grape, — wines of the right quality. And we both do wisely in our kind. Why should we so study the sympathies and antipathies of the palate, and yet lay up no stores in the memory, no abiding savors, for the delight of the heart and indulgence of the imagination? Truly no reason can be rendered. *But this I will affirm*, that if we could analyze, every man

for himself, our fund of joyous susceptibility, we should find that much, very much, of it is attributable to those early sources, those scenes and sports of boyhood,—lasting in their influence, however faintly they may be retained as to their impressions.

Here, then, were resources enough for the day ; and there was hardly a day so long as to outlast my faculty of amusing it ; but the evenings, the winter evenings,—the hours upon hours of darkness from January to April,—how should I employ them ? I, that, like Prospero, had thrown my books away, deeper than plummet ever sounded, even to the very depths of oblivion. The tale is soon told. Vice and idleness are short words, and they happen to be the most appropriate for my purpose. Cards and the Sporting Magazine ; the Sporting Magazine and cards ; this poor ting-tang was all the variety that I could draw from that grand, and powerful, and all expressive instrument, — time.

In a great school like Eton, no dame nor tutor, watch as they may, can be vigilant enough to keep their pupils out of mischief at all times and places. They have no special privilege of ubiquity, and therefore, while they were elsewhere engaged, we perverse imps, some six or seven of us, would be sitting in secret conclave over something that served us for a card-table, as grave, and silent, and solicitous as any cabinet-council that ever met. Our souls were in our game, — they might have been seen fluttering about visibly among the cards by any spectator, if he were only gifted with eyes sharp enough for the office. Cassino, cribbage, and picquet, whist and quadrille, held place with us of the nine Muses. We divided ourselves among the suits. We shuffled, cut, and dealt away our whole evening existences. To be sure, the gulf before us was no absolute abyss, our stakes *being limited to three-penny points* ; but this was enough

n all conscience for boys, who had no larger fund to draw upon than their weekly half-crown allowance. Habit makes practised hands ; and, by and by, we grew into wily gamesters, — expert shufflers of the cards, — proficients in all other respects, save only that we were too apt upon occasion to confound our tricks and honors.

This could not last long, — the loser is as eagle-sighted as the lover himself, — as suspicious, jealous, and quarrelsome to the full. Slander began to rear her head among us ; the rumor went about, that, somehow or other, in our pack there were more knaves than enow. Thereupon crimination, and recrimination hard upon that. The devil of discord drove the gaming devil clean out of our society. Our cards were thrown into the fire, — a congenial element to them, doubtless, if all be true that we hear of their hellish origin.

Still there was the Sporting Magazine in reserve for me ; a reservoir indeed, as well in its copiousness as in its delight, alike inexhaustable to me. Another change had come over me. A new caprice — so various were the characters of that magic lantern, my fancy — came tumbling in to put to flight the gravity of my legitimate studies. In short, I was infected to my heart's core by the general epidemic of schoolboys, — even as from the time of Horace to our own, and we may be sure much earlier, and much later, —

“Imberbis juvenis custode remoto
Gaudet equis canibusque, et aprici gramine campi.”;

and, for my especial part, I cherished the fancy so much the more fondly on the *nitimur in vetitum* principle, inasmuch as I had but scant hopes of gratifying it really and in matter of fact. Just as, in one of Shakspeare's plays, Helena, I think it is, takes Bertram to her heart, and enshrines his image there as her idol, although, as she herself confesses, —

“ It were all one
That I should love a bright particular star,
And seek to wed it ; he’s so much above me.”

The fact is, that at this time, and for some years afterwards, my family were abroad, and consequently the country, or at least my native country, with all its sports and pleasures, was henceforth as utterly unknown to me as the Great Desert. I can hardly say whether I was a gainer or loser by my exclusion from this my early paradise. It is true, you cannot more surely avert the course of a boy’s spirit from its intellectual channel than by opening to him freely and unreservedly the issue of field sports. There is that witchcraft in their excitement and variety, that no discipline can exorcise ; imbue the mind thoroughly with that color, and it is a miracle if it can be brought afterwards to take any else. But then, on the other hand, the pining passion is almost as ill an enemy to peace and perseverance as the rioting passion itself ; at all events it may be so, and in my own case it was not far otherwise.

It happened that I was in a room with a boy bitten by the same gadfly, and afflicted by the same hopelessness of relief, as myself. As we could not have the substance we got the shadow ; that is, for our joint and several comfort we took in the Sporting Magazine together. This, in my then notions, was the only manual for the gentleman,—the chronicle of things, in the German phrase, markworthy. The *dii majores* of my library, Homer, Euripides, and Juvenal, might lie on my book-shelves in a sort of indolent, Epicurean ease, regardless of the nether world, and unregarded by it ; but its *lares* and *penates*, the familiars of our gladsome hearth, the companions of our glee and gayety, were the said Sporting Magazines. Other books I might occasionally read ; *but these only* I studied, learned, and got by heart ; the

one study was the legitimate wife of my duty ; the other the darling, passionate mistress of my affection. As for these last, if I had expected to find the philosopher's stone within their pages, I could not have searched them more intently. My friend was all for the turf ; while the achievements of the less ambitious sportsman, the moving accidents of flood and field, held me in fascination. They were as much sanctified to me now in the person of the crack rider, as they had been before in that of the warrior. Unhappily, I could not say with the poet, —

“ Non equidem invideo, miror magis ”;

my admiration of the lot of my more favored fellows was complicated with a perverse dissatisfaction at my own.

As a proof how the mind, when fixed obstinately on a single object, draws every thing awry and into derangement, I really believe that I felt as much inward shame in those days at the consciousness that I could not sit a horse over a high fence in good sportsmanlike form, as I could feel at present if I were to find myself scouted as a blackguard. Of all boyish absurdities, this is the most glaring and crying, or rather braying, one.

However, as for the Sporting Magazine, my predilection for it was by no means unreasonable. The letters of Nimrod were then in course, — published in it duly from month to month, — admirable compositions in their way, — written with the ease of a gentleman, the spirit, zest, and thorough knowledge of a true sportsman, the elegance of a classical scholar, and the tact, keenness, and discrimination of an accomplished man of the world. Every one was pleased ; and, as for me, I was enraptured with them. Often and often have I gone up into my room after evening school or chapel, drawn the curtains, stirred the fire, wheeled round my arm-chair, set my tea-things *and toast in order*, and then — rubbing my hands

with ecstatic glee to see myself surrounded by such good things — to my favorite Sporting Magazine ; gloating over it sentence by sentence, returning to its vivid descriptions again and again, and dwelling upon them in fanatical fondness, like a lover upon the portrait of his mistress.

To me at such moments, much and deeply considering those things, as Cicero and Lord Brougham have it, a master of fox-hounds was level in dignity with his sovereign, and the owner of a racing-stud nothing less than a demigod. The old Olympic enthusiasm in their favor was revived within my bosom, —

“ *Palmaque nobilis
Terrarum dominos evehit ad deos.* ”

Briefly, my imagination was like nothing so much as the hall of an old manor-house a century ago, hung round with antlers, foxes' heads and brushes ; here and there a plush coat or two, boots, spurs, and hunting-whips, guns and powder-flasks, portraits of favorite hounds and hunters, race-horses, with their pedigrees at length, hunting-maps, and framed and glazed descriptions of runs of glorious memory. As for Homer and Virgil, and other such worthies, they came only to call, appeared upon special summons, and departed with the occasion.

But I found in course of time that this sportsmanship at second hand, this *cestui qui* trust enjoyment, to use a law phrase, had hardly substance enough for my appetite. I had got up the subject sufficiently well in all conscience, as far as it could be done from books. I was anxious to put my speculations to proof, to get into the thick of action. I was loath to have it said of me, as Iago said of Cassio, that the bookish theoric, mere prattle without practice, was all my sportsmanship.

My comrade was as impatient as myself, — a youngster of the same stirring spirit ; and, accordingly, we had no

got a capful of wind, or, if you will, a purseful something more substantial, than we launched out with spread. We got together two or three couple of 1, undersized harriers ; hired a boat for the season ; transferred our whole sporting *materiel* to a lone on the river, half way down towards Datchet.

There was an end of my classics for that year ; I hung harp on the willows of Blackpotts, and it was long again awakened it. I should have said, moreover, was unlucky enough to win an old gun at a raffle ; between shooting and sham hunting, with the occasional variety of our boat, we did merrily. As for our in the course of a month or two we really got them to very creditable condition and discipline. There lack of wild rabbits in the country thereabout, these we made our chief sport ; and, one膜day, we achieved a prodigious exploit indeed ; no man that of running into a hare after a chevy of a sur, sometimes out of hearing, and very frequently sight. I have had my fill since of every variety d sports, with their legitimate pride, pomp, and cirance ; but I question whether all the joyousness ever felt in this way, could it be crowded together, come up to the exultation of that single moment, we took up our hare from among the dogs, as it angled in the ditch, and danced about it in all “ the soul of game,” the joy of cannibals over their

sides my ordinary pastimes, my frequentation of the side led me into numberless scrapes and adventures. Dwellers by road and river are said, and perhaps to be gifted with greater readiness of act and word, aier sense of the ridiculous, and quicker intuition, most other liege subjects of his Majesty. The of course being, if we first presume the fact, that

they see more, and hear more, and talk more, and are conversant with a greater variety of our kind, than other people. Whatever the general rule may be, I believe that in my own case this familiarity with the river-god added some sharpening touches to my character.

Among our fluvial customs, we had been in the habit, some or other of us, from time immemorial, of waging a traditional war with the bargemen ; perhaps at the suggestion of Horace, *pueri nautis pueris convitia nauicæ ingerere*, or, more probably still, from the effervescence of our boyish humors. But the classical warfare, it should seem, was one merely of words ; whereas, at Eton, we were not content to stop short there ; the *argumentum a lapide* was by far the most forcible feature of our parley. In my time, there was a wharf of rather late construction between the shooting-fields and river. Its surface had been laid down with stones taken from the bed of the river, smoothed of course, and rounded, many of them, by attrition, and lying there most invitingly ; any of them a match for the sword and spear of a Goliath. This was our *arma-mentarium*. One would have supposed that a Balearic colony had been settled just at that point of the river, — so continuous, and so fast and furious withal, was the storm of stones hailed down from it on every poor devoted barge that chanced to pass while we were in presence. In vain when coming up the stream would they avoid our battery by keeping the left bank, and taking the deadwater cut up to the locks ; as though the precept in Virgil had been prophetic for them, —

“ Hanc littoris oram
Effuge, cuncta malis habitantur mænia Gracis,” &c.

At all events the lines applied to us exactly ; we were indeed bad Grecians, as bad as ever dislocated syntax. *Then was our malice ceaseless, unrelenting our persecu-*

tion to the very last ; their oaths and execrations were delicious music in our ears, and occasionally even a patterning charge of small shot, directed, probably *in terrorem*, over our heads, would be answered by a triumphant shout of defiance. It was only when they could shelter themselves behind the bulwark of the locks that they were at leisure to look around them and draw their breath in safety.

In such child's play as this there was nothing to be vaunted ; but it happened to me divers times, by the vicinity and advantage of the river, to be engaged in expeditions of somewhat greater dignity as well as danger. The wall of the little park, a level tract lying directly under the terrace of Windsor Castle, was just on the other side of the water. In that park, as we well knew, hares were in as good plenty, or nearly so, as rabbits in an ordinary warren. Of course our evil concupiscence was for ever going astray there. Here was the forbidden ground before us, and the river lying between, of most convenient use and furtherance, whether for access or escape. We had a boat and gun, and for what purpose unless to use them ? it was but a shot, and then away, — why should we not make the trial ? At last, after many resolutions and irresolutions, we took heart of grace, and one fine evening, just at the sweet hour of sunset, we stole over, scaled the wall, prowled about for a horrible eternity, as it seemed to us, of five minutes, — and then, thanks to my comrade's markmanship, returned with a fine hare, and, stranger still, without question or molestation.

As the trick was to be done so easily, I determined to try my skill upon it single-handed. This I chose, as I did not care to have any witness of my bungling management of the gun ; and accordingly, a day or two after, *under cover of the early fog*, I put myself in practice.

I walked the ground for some little time, and at last, as I was beginning to despair, came upon a hare in her form, within five yards of her. I levelled, blew the poor thing's head to atoms, ran up, caught hold of it, and made for the wall again with my heart beating as if it would have beaten itself to pieces. But my luck had left me. Nemesis was on the watch, — an alarm was given, and I was pursued hotly, at fifty yards' distance, by some fellows who came out upon me from a garden gate. I had time enough to have got clear off, bag, baggage, and all, if I had only had presence of mind as well ; but this was the one thing lacking. I got up to the wall, threw the hare over it, and tried the gun ; but the throw failed, and it fell back again. Still I could have picked it up, and made it sure, but the frenzy of fear possessed me. My only concern was, how to save myself. I clambered over, got into the boat with my prize, and left my gun behind me. It was a good riddance. I never fired another shot from that time to the day that I left Eton.

CHAPTER V.

“ There put on him
What forgeries you please, — marry, none so rank
As may dishonor him, — take heed of that ;
But, Sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips
As are companions, noted and most known,
To youth and liberty.” — HAMLET.

“ The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighboured by fruit of baser quality.
And so the prince obscured his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness, which no doubt
Grew, like the summer grass, fastest by night ;
Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty.” — KING HENRY V.

BUT these incidents, it will be said, are childish, trivial and even scandalous. True, they are so ; but they are significant nevertheless, and therefore they are here in their right place. The vicious humors of the body, as well as its healthy juices, deserve, and must have, the consideration of the physiologist ; and, in the portraiture of any individual mind, if we should suppress every thing that is good and admirable in it, we should reduce the description for the most part within a sadly narrow compass. Indeed, it may be a truth that one would dly wish to set forth in public, but it is true, I fear, nevertheless, that a slight dash of recklessness — for I do not call it blackguardism — in a boy may point to good rather than to evil. If grown people can maintain the highest and strictest tone of morality it is well for them, and they will have their reward ; but we should remember that they are reasonable beings, and do not need coercion to keep them within due bounds. They know the value of virtuousness. They can love it in

itself and for its own sake. But with boys we must take another rule for their treatment. If we lace them too straight, body or mind, we shall run the risk of crippling and deforming them. If their spirit should occasionally throw them on the wrong side of the line, it is better, perhaps, to tolerate the excess than to hazard a greater mischief,—that of suppressing the warm fountain whence it arose, and whence every thing great and lovely must arise likewise. I have had some experience in these things, and I judge as the result of it that these superficial starts of humor on the disposition, like those on the surface of the skin, are often the indications of strength rather than of a vicious habit. These occasional outbreaks to the mind are what a counterstrain is to the bow. Mere remissness or laxity is by no means the same thing ; let the bow be bent for a moment or two in the direction contrary to its usual one, and its elasticity will be all the greater when it returns to its proper frame.

So far as I can trust my recollection, I am confident that this spirit of bravade, this slight disposition to excess, ended in no harm to me,—rather, perhaps, the contrary. I lay by, rested and refreshed myself, and then to work again. The mower, so says the proverb, loses no time while he is whetting his scythe ; and though I could not then be said to be engaged actively and designedly in sharpening my intellect, still, albeit unconsciously, I was improving its temper. True, I had omitted all thought and practice of study, but I retained my strength of memory, my habit of observation, and my measure, such as it was, of previous acquirements ; and a boy thus far in advance cannot fail, in spite of himself and all his idleness, to be gaining ground. My idleness was that of a lake, a reservoir. You would judge it to be a piece of mere stagnation, making no progress and *receiving no perceptible increase*,—but so you would

judge hastily. Its seeming laziness is nothing more than the collectedness of repose. It is fed from sources that you know not and cannot see,—here a spring, and there a streamlet; each at their several points augmenting its volume, and gradually raising it to a height whence it may throw off its redundancy into the channels provided for it. Listen to the recommendation of the poet,—

“*Alternis cessare novales
Et segnem patiere situ durescere campum.*”

The main principle is a good one; but those vile features, the *segnem* and *situ durescere*, do much to spoil the picture,—at least as far as it is illustrative of the mind. However, to carry on the analogy, for a year's space my intellect had its respite; it was not broken up by the plough, nor tortured by the harrow, nor pestered by the seed of the classical sower; but it was open to the “skyey influences,” the genial effect of the sun, rain, and wind. Even the coarseness of my daily practices and amusements, vile as they might be, vile, if you please, as dung, served it nevertheless for a kind of manure, and imparted to it something of a warm, quickening, stimulating property.

This warmth of disposition is a great point to gain. It is the prime moving power. Enthusiasm, energy, confidence, every good working quality, depends upon it. It is indeed a blessed influence, and one that I owe in a great measure to the stir and alacrity of the life that I then led.

Formerly, I had lived too much the life of a recluse, and had contracted too many of the crudities of mere scholarship; and even of that scholarship, when I went among my fellows, I often carried nothing with me but its awkwardness. They were gay, and light, and superficial, as boys usually are, and perhaps ought to be. Generally I was *deeper than they*, but it would often happen that I

did not know my soundings. In my anxiety to get to the bottom of my subject I was apt to get beyond my depth, to lose my footing, and flounder in confusion. Consequently, as they talked merely from impulse, and had no idea of any thing more than barely skimming the surface without effort or affectation, they were generally better talkers than I, with all their shallowness. Besides, I could never bring myself to go along with them,—I could not enter into their spirit, nor assume at a moment's notice the tone of my society. All this is essential to the talent of conversation, and of course to its enjoyment, and in all I failed utterly; the consequence was, that I felt for the most part ill at ease and out of my element in mixed company. I was not fit for it; I was in the condition of the man described, I think, in the Spectator, who had a fund laid up at home, but not a shilling of change in his pocket. I was no master of the small sword-sleight, the play of conversation. Hence, a host of miscarriages, blunders, perplexities, and mortifications innumerable.

Above all, I wanted confidence in myself, and when I say that, I include in it all that I have just said of my other deficiencies,—*hinc mihi prima mali labes*. All my other acquirements were insufficient to compensate to me this single failure; such is education. The child is blind, and the instructor will not use his eyes. It is strange indeed, a very hyperbole of strangeness, that we should take such mighty trouble to teach our children what they can only have occasion to apply once in a while, and yet dismiss them utterly destitute as to matters of signal, and necessary, and daily use. We require them to lay up a load of facts and things in their memory, but as for qualities, the essential features, after all, of the man, we leave them to pick up what they may in their

own slovenly and indiscriminate fashion. Surely this should be amended.

As for myself, I have no doubt that my parents and friends were vastly solicitous that I should know as much as possible of Greek and Latin, and other school learning, but they never took the trouble to inquire whether I had acquired withal so much confidence as would enable me to use it. Like most other parents, indeed like all that I ever knew, they never gave the subject a thought, — far less did they do any thing to encourage in me the admirable quality itself. Consequently, I had it not ; and the only wonder is, that I should have made any thing like the progress that I actually did without it. In fact, even the man of genius, without confidence, is like a handicraftsman working in the dark ; all his cunning is useless to him, he can do nothing to any purpose, and whatever he attempts he has only his torment for his trouble.

Confidence for worldly ends is of the same efficacy as faith in religion ; indeed, they mean precisely the same thing ; they are identical terms, only that our reverence has reserved the one for religion, and left the other for profane services. In composition, in oratory, in conversation, no one ever succeeded without confidence, — it is impossible, in the nature of things. And so in every action of our life ; we can do nothing, we cannot stir a step to any good purpose, unless we have it. I question much whether even virtue itself can exist apart from it ; I do not mean speculative, fanciful virtue, mere sentimental sickliness, — that of course can shoot out, *fronde tenus*, though never so as to bear fruit, in a soil only skin deep, — but virtue, properly so called, the active, ardent, high-minded quality, the *αρετή* of the Greeks, must have confidence for its associate. Otherwise, how should it have the force, the energy, to leave the way of worldliness, the home of *comfort*, the *haunts* of fashion, to follow out its

calling through all that is revolting to sense in disease, poverty, and wretchedness? how else should it rise above the force of example, the influence of evil communication, the worldliness of formal morality?

But the truth is, that with maiden aunts and grandmothers, and oftentimes even with sisters, confidence in young people, so far from being a term of praise, is a thing, as they construe it, of evil import, — akin to arrogance, and almost identical with it. Now I am quite ready to admit that arrogance and forwardness in children are disagreeable things; although, to do them justice, they are as much better than excessive timidity as superfluity is better than penury. Time will correct the one, but it is a great chance if it will ever infuse life and spirit into the other. But it seems to me that to discourage the growth of confidence, from a notion of its affinity to arrogance, is to mistake the merits of the case altogether. Arrogance in a child is no more essential to confidence, than the dazzling, distracting quality is essential to light, although belonging sometimes to its casual conditions. The spirit of arrogance is the spirit of the boy who is either too much his own master, and has nothing but his humors to amuse him; or else is severely constrained at some seasons, and therefore, when he is let loose at others, requites himself by the indulgence of his licentiousness.

But take the case of a good, kindly, and confiding master of a family, — a man who instructs his own children, who has them habitually about him, and takes an interest in all their studies, wishes, and amusements. The children of such a man can never be forward nor presumptuous. They have no motive to be so; the feeling must be utterly strange to them. It is true they will talk with him confidently, and ask him questions *confidently*, because they have no fear lest they should be re-

I by his impatience, or abashed by his ridicule ; being in such an atmosphere, they must infallibly get to its temperature, — they will take the tone of position. Their confidence will be as free from ice, or nearly so, as the confidence of religious self. In the gentleness of sunshine they will grow health, and strength, and vigor.

my habits of mock sportsmanship more I believe than any thing else, I managed to acquire something of essed quality. I saw a little of the world. I was nt of the “manners of many men” ; and, like the Ulysses, I was instructed thereby to multiplicity of l. I lived much among dealers in dogs, horses, and all sorts of mischief ; with boatmen and their I was conversant with their winding ways, with all ticks and technicalities. In the slang phrase of our was up to a thing or two, —I waxed in the wisdom world ; in the knowledge, not of the scholar, but knowing ones. In one word, I became a profi n the noble science of sleight of mind.

I said of Archimedes, that the engines first invented him for the defence of Syracuse were found to be of efficacy so long as the enemy kept his distance ; hen once he came to close quarters, their service ficult, they could not be used against him. To meet ficulty he devised certain other instruments, carry- sorts of small charge, short bolts, sharp points of small arrows, — in short, a kind of pin and needle y. These, when the enemy came in pellmell,ound to be incomparably more useful than his heavy . And so it was in my case, *mutatis mutandis*. I trace the analogy throughout, but the process would be tedious on paper ; besides, the reader, I doubt is anticipated me.

this account, then, I was a clear gainer. I had ac-

quired a certain degree of self-confidence, and I had lost nothing, not even in the way of my intellectual progress. True, I had fallen back from my classical studies, but only to such a distance as enabled me to take a more complete view of them,—to observe their outline, and scope, and general effect more satisfactorily than I could ever have done while I was engaged in studying them bit by bit, and working upon them in detail.

The painter knows full well, and so does the poet, that they cannot hope to estimate their productions aright while they are in the act of execution, or even immediately after ; they must relinquish them awhile, endeavour to shake off their recollection, and then return to them, before they can trust their judgment. *Reculer pour mieux sauter* is a proverb of good profit, and in acting upon it at that time I did “more wisely than I was ware of.”

Nor did I lose any thing from the sum of my classical enjoyments by this my temporary abandonment of them, —

“For short retirement urges sweet return.”

So Milton tells us, and my own experience told me the same thing. Indeed, the very coarseness of my substituted objects, the garbage that I fed on, served to heighten by their contrast the charms of poetical and intellectual imagery, whenever I might happen to encounter it ; just as in the docks they offer us a piece of bread and cheese, as the best preparation to the palate for its criticism on that dear, good creature,—wine. Ever and anon in the midst of my truant pursuits a burst of poetical recollection would come over me,—the flow of sweet harmony would blend itself with my spirit ; and I seemed to myself to see the old, familiar forms, *to hear those late beloved voices calling me to return to*

their communion. Then was my soul moved, and my heart was stirred within me. I was like a wanderer in a far country, when, as he journeys along, a sudden touch of music, an air early known and late remembered, startles him into a momentary home-delusion, and breathes through him the spirit of his boyhood, the voice of tenderness in affliction.

This poetical affection was the amulet that I wore constantly about me, as a charm against the effect of absence from my studies, and consequent estrangement. And, O, the great, and good, and glorious charm that it was and has ever been to me ! For those that want it, Heaven preserve them in their destitution ! For myself, I would as soon suffer myself to be bereft of any one of my senses as forego that most gracious sentiment. It is the lamp of life, the soul of all our finer enjoyments, the soother of our evils, the very instinct of virtue, the essence of all that is grand and generous, the prompter of benevolence, the counsellor even of devotion itself. How often, when my spirit is drooping I know not why, and my soul disquieted within me, has one of its slight touches kindled my heart to such a burst of gladness as hours of loneliness have not been long enough to exhaust. Such is its comfort in distress ; nor are its worldly uses less admirable. Knowing well, as I did in those days, my lack of readiness and assurance, I was in the habit, — and it is a habit that I do most earnestly recommend to all others of my temper, — of drawing a long draught of poetry, of dwelling on its sweet savour, and swelling my spirit with its fulness, as often as I was required to exhibit myself in public ; whether at the pupil-room, or in school, or at speeches, or in mixed company. This was almost a specific. Oftentimes it redeemed me from disgrace into good esteem, and hardly ever did it fail altogether.

Here, then, was a grand use, — a superlative service ; but there were also many others. The sentiment of poetry was like a magazine of lucifers to me, — a thing that I could carry everywhere without charge, and sufficient by itself, in darkness, and loneliness, and all discomfort, to light up a fire of joyfulness at a moment's notice. Where was the sting of disappointment, or the sorrow of solitude, to one so provided, — to a boy who needed no other comforter than a speech of Homer, an ode of Horace, or a passage of all poetical concentration in Shakspeare ? I speak, it may be, simply, — childishly, if you will, — but at least sincerely. Thus was poetry, in my hours of idleness, the conservative element of my intellect ; the vital principle that held all my acquirements in one, and bound them up, as the Scripture says, in the bundle of life together. Of late, indeed, I have done it less homage than it deserves, both from its own uses and from my gratitude. I have treated it as little better than a toy of childhood, — a thing forgotten ; but, nevertheless, its efficacy has been made good, its service endures within me. True, its fire may no longer be in flame, — but it has penetrated through my metal, — it has been wrought up into my composition, — it has purified my mind from utter dross and coarseness to all that it now has, however little it may be, of sterling quality.

I have said that I contrived to acquire a certain measure of self-confidence, and so to be sure I did ; but that measure was by no means so full a one as I could have desired. Confidence is a plant of slow growth, — I believe that I may have said this before ; if so, I can only trust that the impression of an important truth will be doubled by its repetition, — and my mind, sensitive and chilly as it was then, was by no means likely to force that slow growth into forward-

This I felt in many ways, but particularly in sation ; and I have yet a recollection of certain incidents that besell me about that time, and are perhaps their mention.

frequent companionship of my dogs, gun, and brought me, as they naturally would, a host of associates from among my schoolfellows. My Je, too, — my room-fellow, if I may hazard such lation of the Latin *contubernialis*, — was a boy prettily of many friends. Whether it was his forte, foible, I cannot say, — opinions upon this will beious as the tastes, habits, and judgments of indi-, — but he had the faculty, beyond any being that knew, of making titled acquaintances, conciliating and retaining them. Not from any servile or lick- propensity, — forefend such an imputation ! no ver deserved it less, — a kinder, purer, more ble, and more disinterested disposition never ex- never at least in my own sphere of existence, —

had been a reader of old romances, a conner of ic histories, and he was an antiquarian still, — *tenus* ; he had a great taste for heraldry, and some aste of it ; he was a worshipper, barely on this olatry, of high names, and families, and associa-

To his apprehension they were as high as heaven or thereabouts. All this had given his mind, or his imagination, its deep, ardent coloring. It was of poetry to him, and much better suited to his than any that he could find among the classics, he was no inapt scholar either. His spirit was sant with strange zoölogy, — it dwelt among grif- yvers, cockatrices, unicorns, and lions, of all her- colors ; but it was a high and honorable spirit ieless, — it loved the nobles of the earth in the

abstract, for their nobility, and not from any servility of its own.

Consequently, and by favor of my friend, our poor apartment became a levee room for the honorables, and right honorables, and lordlings of Eton. Had it been endowed with consciousness, it must have expanded itself, from sheer pride, like the frog in the fable, to twenty times its original dimensions. Of course it was incumbent upon me, and very heavily incumbent too, in general, to practise at such times all the graces and amiabilities of the obliging host. But this was more easily tried than done, — *non cuivis homini*, — it is not every one that can assume the ease and elegance of the genuine Corinthian. However, as long as I was off my guard, and could talk freely and unconstrainedly, I did very well. Unluckily this was not often the case.

I have spoken before of my literary appetite, my universal book-gluttony. In this I was like the American sloth. Husk and kernel, bark and skin, leaves, blossoms, and fruit, all was one to me ; and, like that animal of ill fame, I never satisfied my cravingness until I had absolutely exhausted it. As for digestion, I took no care of it, and the consequence was, that facts and stories of all kinds remained in my memory just as I had laid them up there. I had no power to turn them to their legitimate use, — in other words, to extract their essence and then waive them altogether. By this habit I made a sort of curiosity-shop of my mind. I was a dealer in things of mere fancy and no use. However, as I had generally some kind of answer to any question that could be asked, this was enough to give me the same of general information, to make my responses oracular.

If in this our goodly society there happened to be a doubt or difficulty, and I was present, it was sure to be referred to me. But, alas ! my reputation cost me more

than its utmost value. As Hesiod says, I took it up lightly and easily, but I found, when I came to carry it on, that it was all too heavy and cumbersome for me. A question of fact, indeed, I could often satisfy ; but if an explanation, or proof, or general account of any thing were wanted, there I was a sad bungler. My solutions were like that of an enigma by a riddle, — *obscurum per obscurius* ; I was perfect in the faculty of darkening a doubt into a mystery, — of curing a half-apprehension till I had killed it. As often as I found that I had got on slippery or difficult ground, that is to say, when I had the most need of the little confidence that I had acquired, then I infallibly lost it. I was anxious to make good the estimate that my young friends, gratuitously, it seems, had made of me, and that anxiety was invariably *felo de se*, — it cut its own throat most effectually. An idea would strike me, — I had a vague glimpse of it, and would fain catch it, and exhibit it, and lecture upon it to my audience, — but, alas ! it proved, nine times in ten, to be no better than an *ignis fatuus*, destined for no other offices but to lure me into bog and brier, and there leave me, tangled, bewildered, and lost inextricably. Then was I possessed with the stammering and hesitating demon, — the “ syncope and solemn pause ” would cut short my periods, — or, at best, I found that, like Ixion, I had embraced a cloud instead of a reality, and had generated from it nothing but strange, monstrous shapes and unintelligible absurdities.

The fact is, that all this while I was in a state of transition, and therefore of ineffectiveness. I was midway between the habitual mind and the rational one. My condition was that of the grub. I had neither the low-lived quickness of the caterpillar nor the “ airy faculty ” of the butterfly. I had lost my legs, and wings as yet were not imparted to me. I was a thing of dim perceptions, of

clouded instincts, of elementary intelligences, jostling each other blindly in their darkness. In short, I was an intellectual grub.

This sense of insufficiency in conversation was a thing of great affliction to me. I could not account for it. I could not imagine its cause ; and of course I was unable to provide a remedy. It was a mischief, too, that propagated itself ; my consciousness of one miscarriage, by a sort of sympathy, a painful apprehension of its recurrence, was sure to produce many more. I was frightened at my former self. The spirit of confidence, the warm, kindly blood so recently infused into me, was fretted into a sort of poisonous depravity. And no wonder. These compunctionous visitings, even to grown people, with all their callousness, are thorns in their sides. And how should they be less painful to the tenderness of young flesh ? I have read in some literary memoirs of a man of fortune, who destroyed himself, in the affluence of all worldly good, from sheer bitterness of spirit ; and why ? Simply because he could not talk. He was condemned to sit in society, and brood over his absolute unfitness for it. Consequently he could neither live in it nor out of it, and the catastrophe was a thing of course. Few instances, perhaps, have reached to this point, but very many have gone far in the same direction.

No one who knows fully the pleasures of conversation would give much for any others of this world in comparison with them. Many a man has marred, as far as his own enjoyment is concerned, all the delicacy and delight of a good dinner by his utterance, in an unlucky moment, of something silly, or absurd, or blundering, by giving out a vapid concoction of his own ; whereas he should have been content to take in gladly and thankfully the choice savours provided for him. Such is the effect of conversation, whether for good or evil, on our sum of happiness.

ness ; and yet the talent has never been cultivated ; we are contented, the most of us, to wrap it up in a napkin, and hardly dream of putting it out to interest. O fashion, what a thing thou art ! O life and human nature ! O folly, and perversity, and all unreason !

I could not but know that I had the reputation of being a ready-witted fellow ; no less so, certainly, than the common crew of my companions. I was aware, too, that I had the knowledge of more things than they. I could translate better, I could learn better, versify better, and write essays better than the bulk of them. These faculties I took to be the constituents of talent, and, to a certain point, I had them. I was strong on paper,—my years considered,—and yet I was little better than a fool *vivâ voce*. This was a hard problem ; and when I considered withal that I took mighty pains to dress out my words, while my comrades never bestowed a thought upon them, and yet produced them more presentably than I ever could, I began to fancy that the hand of destiny was upon me, and that despair was my best wisdom, — never dreaming, poor simpleton as I was, that effort in society is only another term for frustration, and that there, in the words of Scripture, the surest strength is to rest still.

In fact, I had so bothered my faculties—those I mean of conversation—by putting them upon difficulties beyond their power, that I had gone far to unfit them even for the plainest subjects. I had hampered my key, a very simple one, in a complicated lock, and when I went to use it upon its proper one I found it of no service.

We have seldom at that age enough of energy or discernment to exert ourselves upon any subject unless it be a specific one ; as for the improvement of any general faculty, *such as that of conversation, thought, and twenty*

others, we hardly ever think of it. But here I excepted myself from the rule. I gave proof for once of a greater force of character than is usual in the boy. I was so galled and nettled by the constant sense of my infirmity that I set myself one day to consider it thoroughly, — to find out its causes, and devise their fitting remedy.

I had observed, that, while I was in conversation with boys inferior to me in age and attainment, I was free from every symptom of nervousness, with all its attendant distresses. I did not care to throw my jewels of phraseology to suckling pigs. I said nothing for effect, and I was pretty sure for that reason to talk easily and naturally. It was only where I thought a sententious saying likely to be appreciated that I was anxious to exhibit my talent in that kind, — and a sorry exhibition, in all conscience, I generally made of it. It occurred to me that this was really the case. The hint was a good one, and I endeavoured to improve it. I made a point of joining talk with my juniors as often as I had occasion. I used, albeit unconsciously, the Socratic method of trying them at all points on a given subject, of extracting something from them, if I could only find it in them, and leading them unawares to such conclusions as might tend to edification ; all this I did as freely and familiarly as possible, — never to the point of annoyance. A hundred subjects connected with their homes, their neighbourhood, their friends, their hopes and prospects, their likings and dislikings, their books, studies, and amusements. On such things as these I was in the habit of trying them, as a Dutch painter tries, and manages, and disposes his manikin, for my own use and advantage. In time I found the benefit of it. It was a kind of child's diet to me, whereby my mind was to be recruited and renovated from its exhaustion, — a bread and milk poultice, a thing of admirable use for an overstrained sinew.

sides, I was here the sole moving power ; I had the game at my command, and could vary its points turns as I thought proper. The spirit of sober interest of pleasantry, and of friendly admonition, each in turn, was put in play, much to my own service, and is so, I will venture the affirmation, to that of my subjects. I had abandoned my awkward endeavour to climb up an ascent too steep and difficult for me. I left the high, bare ground, and come down again to wth pasture ; and I soon felt the advantage of the change in my improved heart and condition.

is was not my only move, — my solitary *nivus formus*. I remember one day, when I was in school with the rest of my division, a boy was called up whom a bad early habit had made a dunce, and no trouble was ever likely to make a scholar. A question was asked and he was about to blunder out an answer. "Don't speak till you are sure," said the master, obviating his perplexity, and concluding that no good was to come of it. I was a mere listener ; I had no sanguine concern in the injunction, but still it made a stronger impression on me than on the proper subject of it. "Don't speak till you are sure." I laid up the saying in my heart, and went about a great part of the day running upon it. The words were emphatic ; they were as my fancy as something oracular, and I considered whether the rule involved in them might not be applicable to myself. It must be so. Certainly it was. Well, I determined within myself, When I get into an argument I will not make such a fool of myself as I have hitherto. I will never speak till I am sure of the point that I am to utter. This was not the master's principle, but I chose so to take it for my regulation. Be sure, this is not the principle that guides our *on practice*, but I believe it to be a very good one.

for all that. Words are acts ; and, if it be reasonable to think before we do any thing else, it is reasonable, by the same rule, to think before we speak. However, the vulgar course runs directly counter to this direction. I have heard experienced people, over and over again, when the question was, how their children or young friends should learn to speak a foreign language, to complaints of difficulty in diction and inability to frame words into sentences, "O," I have heard them say, "never mind that. It will come in time. All that you need do for the present is to talk at all events. You should not consider what you say, only say something, right or wrong, intelligible or not ; blunder on as you can. All that you want is practice."

Now, in my humble opinion, to act upon this advice is to begin at the wrong end. To expect to talk well, without a previous notion of what one is about to say, is no less absurd than to expect to read well by reading backwards. I am quite sure, that, if any man who has reason to distrust his powers of expression, and most of us are in that predicament, the moment that a subject is started, should check himself, pause, and take aim before he fires, he would despatch it much more neatly and satisfactorily ; at all events, we should do well to use the exercise until we have acquired something like a habit of easy expression, and then, if we please, we may trust that habit in preference.

I have been the fuller on this subject, in the first place from its own importance, and again, that I might hold myself up as an example of perseverance, successful in the issue, though apparently at the outset hopeless ; this being my grand principle, the alpha and omega of my system, that every man by patience and perversity may frame himself intellectually to what he pleases, or, at all events, may make good his advance illimitably. As to

importance of the subject, it has always in my opinion been shamefully underrated ; we have schemes, fables, and theories innumerable on hieroglyphics, nations, ancient mythologies, histories of the earth before the flood, and a hundred other whimsies that concern more than the fixed stars, while the faculty of conversation, the thing of all others, next only to religion, conducive to our happiness, is yet without an exact science. Some great men, indeed, have made a show of it honor, — honor, I say, and not justice ; Bacon, among the rest. He tells us, in a passage as well known by many in his works, that reading makes a full man, writing a correct man, and conversation a ready man. This, concerns the last, is but a short measure. However on this statement, it may fairly lay claim to the highest place of all the three.

For the best of all qualities, how scanty is their use ! or how they can be used readily ! What avails his armor to the owner if it be hung out of the way ? or to the soldier his speculative science, his skill in the rules of war, if he have not the readiness to practise them ? the weapon's point is against his bosom ? or his stored stores to the orator, if he be slow to find them ? his exhibition is instant ? Readiness, then, the offspring of conversation, is the only self-sufficient virtue, — as much with a little, whereas others do but little or a great deal ; but, more than this, it deserves a eulogy than Bacon or any one else has ever rendered to it. Other qualities, thought, reading, composition, poetic feeling, are excellent, each according to its time ; singly and severally they may be taken as the sun, the atmospheric influence, the careful cultivation, wherein and whereby the intellect is to take its birth ; but conversation is more than any of them ; *all in one, used aright, in the right spirit and with the*

right company ; it is the hotbed of the mind, warm, deep, rich, and vigorously generative, — doing in an hour what reading in ordinary cases would leave undone at the close of an entire day ; and yet this so precious a jewel, with all its attributes, is as much disregarded, or, at least, as little studied, as though it had never existed.

This is bad enough with men, but with women it is a folly, a perversity, an absolute wickedness. Nature has done her best to perfect them, and we have done our worst, or nearly so, to deprave them. We frame them — those ministering angels of our domestic joy and comfort — much as a puppet-showman frames his dolls ; we dress them out, and make dancers and musicians of them. These fine accomplishments they practise, as long as they are single, to their own amusement, the admiration of their lovers, and the weariness of all beside ; and when they marry they find that harmony is an insipid thing, ending only in indifference, and so they give it up. Thenceforth their minds would be a mere blank but for their natural quickness in seizing and retaining impressions. Their spirits, indeed, as Shakspeare says, are more finely touched than ours, and to finer issues. With a little care and discipline their conversation would be worth more to their husbands and themselves, a thousand times over, than all the music and dancing and drawing that was ever flourished forth from the academies. Again, the refinement of their conversation would react to the further refinement of their temper, — for the spirit of conversation is a spirit of diffusive and penetrative warmth ; by it, or through its influence, the character is best formed, the whole substance is softened by it, and so prepared that it may be wrought afterwards at the will and for the purposes of the worker. Such is its efficacy ; and yet the man who can endure to drudge through *school-books*, year after year, for the advancement of his

child or pupil, would think an hour of conversation too much to be thrown away upon him. *Oh, curas hominum ! Oh, quantum est in rebus inane !*

I am aware that such rules for the practice of conversation as I have given above, and may give hereafter, are not for grown intellects nor experiences. They are intended as the habit of novitiate, and nothing more. They may serve as bladders and cork jackets, to keep us on the surface ; they may inure us to lie there evenly, and at our ease, and save us, consequently, from the whelming and sinking danger,—the danger of hurry and alarm arising out of the consciousness that we are in an element not yet familiar to us ; in short, they may serve the stead of presence of mind, to a certain point at least. And thus far they are useful ; but they cannot teach us to swim, nor even to strike out. To leave the metaphor, they are indeed auxiliary to the faculty of conversation ; but the full faculty itself, like the light of noon-day, must grow up from the advance of intellect and its gradually widening comprehension. Such rules, then, are only for beginners ; as we ascend the ladder, we must look well to the steps, but when once we have surmounted the ascent, we take no more thought of them. And so, when we have attained the habit of conversation, we should wear it freely and easily ; we should be above the beggarly rudiments of rule and precedent. We may have them indeed at hand, and refer to them as occasions arise, but we should no more rely on them than the expert skater on his stick, or the horseman on his stirrups. The spirit of conversation is the spirit of love ; that is, of warmth, expansiveness, geniality, and entire ease and unconstrainedness ; and, as the poet tells us, —

“ Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.”

To the genius, then, of conversation we must make

our offerings in this spirit, if we would find acceptance for them. Here, as in all the liberal arts, nothing that is labored can be genuinely good. We should give our vein its flow, — we should speak upon impulse. In the painter's phrase, all that we do we should do upon the first conception.

The contrary spirit is the very bane and pest of all social intercourse. It is so wherever it appears, but especially among men of name and note in science, literature, or statesmanship. Such people have too often a notion that they must make a point of sustaining among their friends the dignity acquired by them in their vocations ; that they would fall short of their estimates if they should not strain themselves up to the very utmost of their height ; that, because they happen to be owners of a six-foot reputation, they must do it justice by the corresponding display of magniloquence ; or else, as the safer course, they envelope themselves in their reserve, and will not stir a step lest haply they slip or stumble. Whereas their only study should be to throw away their personality, — *scippos exuere*, — to lose all consciousness of self, — to blend themselves with the subjects of conversation, — and, above all, wherever they go as friends, to leave their reputation in the passage with their hat and gloves.

They seem to forget — these wiseacres, who would fain talk up to their reputed height as scholars — that men who meet in conversation meet as in a market-place, and not as in a theatre, — a temple I believe I should have said, to keep strictly to the Greek original, but I think a theatre is better. They meet, not to gape and gaze at a single strutting actor, but to exchange one with another kind greetings, and social benevolences, and friendly intelligences ; to give and take as each may have to offer ; to part, as they had met, in cheerfulness and mu-

tual good-will. Such self-ostentation is as bad in society as in religion, — in both alike it is odious hypocrisy. A man comes in, is conversant according to form, and goes out again, throwing but a show of service, a husk of benevolence, in the one case to his God, and in the other to his fellow-creatures. Away with them, I say, — out upon such half-faced fellowship !

I have dwelt so long upon this absurdity, I have given its portraiture thus at large, from my experience of its fatal frequency, and my consciousness that in times past I was myself an egregious offender in that way. The history is not yet in place, it belongs to a later period of my life ; but, as I am now upon the subject, I may as well introduce it at this point.

Towards the close of my apprenticeship at the University, I had gained myself a second-rate reputation there. I had read much, and remembered much, though not in the order or determined spirit of a regular reader. I had written whole sheets full of iambics, dabbled in metrical and grammatical insignificancies, got up the chorusses, and made myself as familiar with the plays of Aristophanes as a good Christian would wish to be with the gospel. At this distance I can only shrug my shoulders at such a recital. All this surely is but a poor value for the time it cost me, — a sorry show, to say the best of it. However, many queer coins that are good for nothing in the world pass current, nevertheless, in the University ; and as these attainments of mine were there of a high conventional value, and so declared by those in authority, it was not for me, when I had bought them at so dear a rate, to say any thing in their disparagement. I had become a classical scholar, — none of the deepest, it is true, nor of the most accurate, but, however, a scholar ; this was my chief praise, and it was natural that I should make it *my* pride also. And so I did ; I chew-

ed the cud of my complacency a sufficient while ; but there is a season for all things, and an end of all seasons. It was time for me to throw away childish things, and to enter upon the world ; and, as I was not altogether fooled by force of scholarship, I began to look about me, and consider at what point I should make my entry, and how I could best provide for my after progress. Upon this I found it difficult to satisfy myself ; and, after some perplexity, I chose to let it stand over, and in the mean time to repeat the experiment that I had made so successfully at Eton,—that of giving my mind a holyday, leaving my classics on the shelf, and filling the void by such amusements and gayeties as are held proper to undergraduateship. Accordingly, I hunted, shot, and drove, — played cards and billiards, — raked a little, and drank a good deal, — in short, did every thing but what discipline required of me.

There is a story of a dull German count, who had made acquaintance with some young Englishmen abroad, and would fain catch something of their vivacity. With this view he took up the exercise of jumping over his chairs and tables for a given time ; and in answer to a young friend, who surprised him one morning “in the manner,” and asked what in the world he could be about, “O,” he said, in all simplicity, “*j'apprends à être vif.*” It may be a question whether he had taken the most successful method, and perhaps my attempt to engraft the man of pleasure on the scholar was scarcely better imagined. But, be that as it may, *passons outre.*

I soon found that all my pastimes, however I might vary them, were but insipid things without the seasoning salt of conversation. I observed the gaiety, the joyousness, the general social superiority of those who were gifted with this faculty. I saw that society apart from it was but vanity and vexation, restlessness without interest,

a mask without vital energy. I resolved then to study it. I framed myself, so far as I could, to preëminence as a talker. Unfortunately I could not forget that I had a reputation, — that I was known in the University as a scholar, — and it occurred to me, not unnaturally, that I had buried myself among books, and teased my brains to very little purpose, unless I could show something for my trouble, and assert my preëminence as a learned man over mere laymen. The proper and legitimate use of classical studies I did not then comprehend. I had yet to learn, that, like the things of bodily diet, they should be exhibited after their reception into our system, not as they are taken, in specie, but as they are elaborated, in their effect ; that is, in the spirit, vigor, and force imparted by them to the general intellect. I was anxious, at all events, to show my learning ; and this I did, not by any proof that I had digested it, but by giving the surest of all tokens that I had swallowed it,— in other words, by throwing it up in crude, undigested gobbets, learned quotations, far-fetched classical allusions, and other such wretched stuff of pedantry. I was, indeed, a pedant by preëminence. I went among my associates, not to enjoy myself with them, but to show them how much I was above their mark in book-learning. I was a true phrasemonger. I could not say a plain thing in a plain way. Simplicity, that one sure feature of truth, was to me sheer silliness. I fancied, when I had uttered a fine word, that I had done a fine thing. I had a set of picked phrases, which I was always laboring to drag in, and for that purpose would falsify and stultify all my reasoning faculties, by suiting my arguments to my quotations, rather than my quotations to my arguments. I was full of myself, and of the effect that I was to create ; consequently I would see nothing but as I chose to frame it for my sight, allowed nothing, and quibbled upon the plainest proposi-

tions. I am all but sick, at this distance of time, to think that such a nauseous mass of affectations should ever have been compounded. And yet I was tolerated. Tolerated, ay, and much more, — humored to the top of my bent, — courted and crowned for my silly pretensions. So true it is, that, among people who cannot think for themselves, the pretensions that are most boldly urged are the most readily acknowledged.

CHAPTER VI.

“Thou art but Folly’s counterfeit, and he
That is right foolish hath the better plea.
Nature’s true idiot I prefer to thee.”

So much for affectation and effort, the two cardinal vices of conversation. I had taken them upon trust as my allies, but I soon found that, like the Egyptian king in Scripture, they distressed me but comforted me not at all, and, as they could hardly have been more agreeable to my associates than to myself, it was well for all parties that I got rid of them at last.

And how did I get rid of them? Not by admonition, nor accident, nor reflection, nor observation, — by none of these singly, — but by the conspiracy of them all; simply by the growth of experience. I have already given the account of my former social disquietudes, — the torment arising to me from the consciousness that I had a reputation, and that I was utterly unable to support it while conversant among my fellows. I have spoken, also, of the partial cure of this my infirmity, the advantage of my communings with mere children, — beings below the concern of my ambition. A second affliction of pedantry, a plague of self-dissatisfied scholarship, was now

upon me. It is strange that I did not again of set purpose resort to my old remedy ; that I did not once more fall back, in order to make the better and stronger spring ; that I did not seek to recover my tone of mind in ease and relaxation, — to play the game of conversation, and familiarize myself with its turns among intellectual people, instead of keeping up the strain, and strife, and jealousy of a paltry, self-exhibiting ambition. But of this I did nothing ; I had forgotten my old lesson, its novelty had worn off, and my experience of its use had not been powerful enough to produce in me the renewal of its impressions. I fancied that every thing was to be done by effort, — that conversation was a skirmish, and argument a pitched battle.

In time I should have righted myself, probably, from this wrong bias, but, as it chanced, I must give the merit of my recovery not so much to my own discernment as to a happy accident. During my residence at the University I had become acquainted with a family in the town, consisting, beside the elders, who are not so much to my present purpose, of several daughters, amiable and agreeable young ladies, to the best of my judgment and recollection. Here was a spring in the desert for me, — a source of genial refreshment in the hard, arid regions of academical learning.

It is impossible for a mind of common sensibility to steel itself, at that age especially, against the charms of female gentleness, and vivacity, and intelligence, heightened, too, by elegance of manner, and all the accomplishments of education. The spell soon wrought upon me. I opened my heart to its influence ; the more readily inasmuch as home comforts and delights had been for years past but little known to me, from the residence of my family abroad, and my consignment to comparative strangers for the holydays. I found myself in a new

atmosphere, — a temperature strange to my habits, but yet highly favorable to the development of whatever was good in my disposition. The profit came with the occasion. I was not, indeed, at that time otherwise, but still I was no such simpleton as not to be aware that a drawing-room was a bad theatre for the exercise or exhibition of professed scholarship. Accordingly, I endeavoured to suit myself with a new habit. Under the influence of this warm and kindly atmosphere, I threw off the heavy, cumbersome embarrassment of my academical mantle, and walked freely and at my ease in the light social garb of friendliness. I lost something as a pedant, and gained proportionally as a gentleman. I felt that there was a vein within me, — a vein, too, of precious metal, yet virgin and unwrought. I felt that gayety, imagination, and delicacy of tact and sentiment were qualities certainly not familiar with me, but yet not altogether foreign to me. I resolved to develope them, — to bring them out from my heart's centre to its surface, — to do homage to the Graces, — to forego my studies awhile, and cultivate my affections.

In this I succeeded ; not very brilliantly, it is true, but virtually, nevertheless. Indeed, with such endowments, and such occasions to serve them, my failure would have been a thing much stranger than my success. For readiness, tact, and discrimination, elegance and address, for the acquirement of all these good qualities, there is no school like that of female society. The lesser virtues, too, those of complaisance, kindness, and good-will, with many others allied to them, are hardly to be got elsewhere ; but with these I have no business at present. I am now on the talent of conversation, and that, too, I may safely add to the catalogue above enumerated. The mind of woman, taken in the abstract, and without reference to individuals, when we compare it with that of

man, is much what the graver or penknife is to the axe. It is a thing of no great force,—it can achieve no stupendous work,—scarcely any thing sublime was ever compassed by it; but in matters of minute detail, of ready invention, of nice adjustment, of elegant though superficial execution, it is your only instrument. To hear a woman talk politics is to be sickened of them for days, or weeks, or months after, according to circumstances. This is an unfailing rule. Then to listen to her religion is usually, though not so generally, to be reminded of the hasty curiousness of Eve. Their vivacity is too prompt and sparkling. They fill their measure with the first outbreak of their froth, and when we have waited long enough for it to subside, we look again, and, behold! all is emptiness. Their range, then, is a circumscribed one; but in it they are like fairies within their ring, creatures of infinite grace and power. To be much conversant with them is a thing of as much advantage for the learned man as the lessons of the fencing-master would be to the raw, big-boned recruit. They would not, perhaps, add materially to his strength, but, by teaching him its full use, they would incomparably heighten its utility. This I was not slow to perceive, for one good faculty, that of observation, I had long possessed; and another no less valuable, that of bringing home to my reflection what I might have observed abroad, I had recently acquired. Moreover, I still retained the practice of making experiments upon myself, my ideas and faculties, a practice elsewhere commended by me almost to the height of its deserts; and so, by virtue of this triple alliance, I observed, reflected, and made experiments, studied the graces of female conversation, considered their causes, and endeavoured to form myself to the model; all this I endeavoured, and even succeeded, *so far, at least, as to fit myself for the full enjoyment of*

society. I became a proficient in pleasantry. I raised myself up from the depths to play upon the surface. My delight was in the ripple and foam,—sparkling, glancing, and ever varying. There I basked in the sunshine, the true sunshine of the heart,—the cheerfulness of the domestic fireside. *Et ego in Arcadiâ.* Even so,—*fuius*,—*fuit*. Years are past, hearts are changed, friends are become enemies, but thou and thine are ever one and the same to me. My gratitude flows yet, and flows in fulness, as the gush of an ever-living fountain. Peace be unto this house,—ay, and to its inmates,—and union, and joy, and happiness, and all holiness of heart, now and evermore. As I hope I pray, and as I pray I trust, fervently and wholly.

“Heaven’s peace upon thee, even as thou hast
Over this soul a calm of sunshine cast.”

This improvement was very well, and of very easy practice in that particular place and season. By the grace of this good family, I became an intimate of their house. I was all but domesticated there. It divided my allegiance to college, and took to itself the larger portion. Whenever I entered there, my reserve and I always parted company at the door; it never crossed the threshold with me. But when I went into other societies I was another man. My confidence was chilled by the transition from a warm atmosphere to ceremonial indifference at least, if not coldness. There were other moral obstacles in my way, more than I need enumerate; but there were physical difficulties also, and of these, for the example’s sake, I will render an account. First, then, my defectiveness of voice. If nature intended me for any thing else but a bird-catcher, or rabbit-stealer, or secretary of legation, or mystic quietist, or some other votary of taciturnity, she abused me grievously, for voice *I had none*,—not so much, I dare say, as would serve

to give token of my existence when I was first produced into this wicked world. Whether it was from some central feebleness, some general lack of energy, or rather from the malformation of some essential organ, I cannot say. It is no abiding infirmity ; it rests, thank Heaven, but in my recollection, and there let it rest. I will not disquiet it to call it up ; but certain it is that my poor voice, from my childhood to my youth upwards, was a very miracle of babyishness, — thin, clouded, and gurgling, like the utterance of a drowning man, — manifested but in a bubble, — unintelligibly. The ghost of a gnat could have spoken bolder and more audibly. When I aggravated my voice to the utmost, it hardly came, as it is said in the play, to the pitch of a sucking dove. With a tongue so serviceless, it seemed scarcely credible that I could have been born the son of a woman. Indeed, according to Homer's definition, I was not. Certainly I did not fall within his denomination of *μέφοντες ἄνθρωποι*, — men speaking articulately. This grand distinctive character I lacked utterly, and to my own apprehension the default was a heavy and enduring grievance. So it must needs be with every man in such a predicament. The mind is the man, and the voice is the interpreter of the mind. Look then to its development and management, — cherish it, strengthen it, encourage it ; if it live within you but in obstruction, you were as well extinct altogether for any social purposes.

I need hardly say, that with this imbecility of tongue not one person in ten could understand a tithe of what I said. My words were stillborn. Hence uneasiness on the part of my listeners, — surprise, bewilderment, and at last an utter disinclination to talk with me on the necessary terms, — of endeavouring, that is, to catch my meaning by a continued strain of attention, like that of the *nurse for the breathings* of her baby. Indecision of

voice is the offspring, and again the parent, of indecision of mind. They succeed each other alternately, like David son of Griffith, and Griffith son of David, in a Welsh genealogy ; and so I had a full, an overflowing fund of nervousness, embarrassment, and despite, partly self-originated, partly taken by contagion from my listeners.

This was a crying evil, one that would be sure to spoil every thing, if it were not shortly remedied. This I felt, and set myself to provide for its correction, not indeed continuously and determinedly, or I should have mastered it much more speedily than I did, but by intermittent fits, and therefore a slow process. However, the method that I took was not so ill-suited to my object. With all my present experience I hardly know how I could improve it. I began, as was reasonable, with recitation, reading loudly and energetically such passages from plays, poems, and speeches, as were full of spirit and character ; requiring, therefore, a certain force of emphasis, and variety of intonation. The combination of rapidity with distinctness of utterance was what I most wanted ; and to gain it, I would repeat a strong passage fifteen or twenty times, — varying the tone and emphasis, and running through it every time, as a child would through the gamut, with a quickened rate of execution. I thus acquired the mastery of my tongue ; I could work it as I pleased ; it was as much at my command as any other instrument in the hands of a skilful craftsman ; I spurred and lashed it into activity, — an activity to which in its turn it prompted my mind also. This must always be the case. Promptitude of language, it is true, is generally suggested by that of intellect ; but each reacts upon the other, and suggests it alternately. As they always go together, it matters not which end of the chain we may take up, — the other will be sure to follow, — every one who knows any thing of association knows this ; and

as for those who know nothing of it,—time is short, and explanation is long,—they must rest for any thing that I can do in their ignorance.

This habit of speaking as it were in character, of making one's self a party to the words and sentiments that one recites, is an admirable practice,—admirable for its other effects, independently of the nimble-tongued faculty imparted by it. It sets a man above himself,—above his every-day worldly disposition ; it is the infusion of a new spirit, and generally, of course, a nobler and more heroic one than that familiar to him ; and then, too, over and above its uses, there is the pleasure of the experiment,—a high, glorious, expansive pleasure,—that of inhaling this intellectual exhilarative gas, thrown off as it is—evolved, a chemist would say—in the process of recitation. Those were excellent seasons, glorious hours, when I used as a schoolboy to wend my lonely way to some clear, open space, some wide desert field or common, and there take my stand, wind up my corporal energies to thefeat, and then, in the exultation of my spirit, once, and again, and again still, blow the long, full-mouthed blasts of my Homeric trumpet, till echo exulted with me again, and the air all around, far as eye could reach, was peopled to my fancy with crowds of excited spirits, the thronging heroes of the Iliad. But, alas ! these glories are gone by, perished with the bright season of my youth. The more's the pity that I can only thus clasp them in the embrace of my recollection.

I do not give these details because I expect any one else to be interested in them as belonging to me personally,—far from it ; I have no such expectation or wish ; they are all for the example's sake,—for the proof that all things, according to the Greek line, are the slaves of that wonder-working power, perseverance. No dis-

tance is too long for it, no object too great for it, and no difficulties — I speak according to common use — are too hard for it. With confidence for your fulcrum, this same perseverance for your lever, and wilfulness for your moving power, you will do greater things than were promised in the boast of Archimedes.

Well, when I had got my voice, my next purpose, to be sure, was to make it available. I said some time back that I had put myself upon the study of conversation, and of the reasons why women are so often excellent in it. Upon this I made my observations, and here is the result of them, — a result confirmed to the last letter by all my after experience.

In the first place, I was naturally curious as to the causes of my own frequent failure as a talker. I attributed this, and with good reason, formerly to my nervousness, — of this enough elsewhere. Secondly, to my desire of saying something when I should have been content to hold my tongue ; that is, when I had as yet no definite notion of what I was about to say. This habit I resolved to discard, and did so accordingly. Thirdly, there was the fault of grasping at more than I could hold, — more than I could comprehend, to use the exact word, — instead of taking a single point and following it out, until the question had unravelled itself. This also I addressed myself to remedy. Next came the ambition of hard words, a pitiful ambition indeed, and one fit only for the ears and intelligences of the groundlings. This was my darling sin, endeared to me by the consciousness of my scholarship, and by the fancy (alas, fancy, for thy foolishness !) that it was expedient for me to show it off, as well for its uses as for my reputation. It was a cruel thing, when I had labored for my instrument so long, to find it of no avail when I had attained it, — to get

nothing but my drudgery for my pains,—to be referred to the elder sister, like the old patriarch, when, if there were faith in promise, I had earned the younger one to my wife by seven long years of patient servitude. This was against hope and feeling, against pride and vanity, against the very course of my heart's blood ; and, so long and fondly did I cling to my delusion, I could hardly bring myself to believe that I had done so much to so little purpose,—that the use of all this gymnastic discipline was in the main only to make me walk more straightly, and safely, and steadfastly ; but the more I saw, the more surely was I convinced. I offered the sacrifice at last, albeit with averted face and abhorrent feelings ; and henceforth, instead of dabbling in phrases after the fashion of your half-fledged scholars,—instead of laboring as heretofore to say simple things finely, I made it my study to say fine things, whenever I could get them, as simply as possible. This was my palmary achievement,—my grand conquest over myself ; the triumph of faith over works,—of easy confidence over laborious ostentation. And here I will just say, that, if there be any one thing in my experience absolutely certain, it is this, that in conversation, as in most other things, the further we advance in judgment, the nearer are we brought to the true standard of simplicity ; the more refined our taste, the more it revolts against a load of ornament. In children it is only the entire absence of affectation that makes us love to talk with them. And so it would be in men if they would only profit so far as to strip themselves of their disguises. And, indeed, simplicity in a man is incomparably more lovely than it is even in a child, for this plain reason, that by its very contrast it commends most powerfully, and sets off most delightfully, the excellencies of an active, strong, energetic, and richly endowed *intellect*. This has been reasoned

probably by few, but it must have been felt by all. The character of Gay,

"In wit a man, — simplicity a child,"

endears him to our affections more than all the fables that he ever wrote.

I had another capital fault, one that I held in common with all those numerous talkers whose ambition is beyond their strength. I used to adventure on long sentences, too long by far for my stretch of intellect, and generally, of course, fainted and fell by the way before I got to the end of them. My idea of what a sentence should be, and Lord Chatham's idea of what a battle should be, happen to coincide, — both should be short, sharp, and decisive. I mean this not of the entire sentence itself, — no such thing ; your mathematical points, your points without extension, must be left to the geometers, — at least they will never do in conversation ; they are odious as odiousness itself, — unsociable as pins and needles. By all means, then, if you please, make yourself periods of a mile long, only do not let them drag their slow length along in wandering prolixity. Articulate them, — give them joints, — let their members be bound together in a bond, as the lawyers term it, jointly and severally, — and then, though they be lengthened in their continuation to the measure of O'Connell's tail, no matter. Why is the serpent the most subtle beast of the field, — the nimblest and most insinuating, and of the most expeditive faculty ? Simply because he "is of articulations all compact," — vertebrated from head to tail, — *tantum series juncturaque pollet*. It was said by Suetonius, I think of Cæsar, that he could hardly fail to be successful, — that one great achievement necessarily prepared him for another, — "*Semper enim perfectissimas clausulas actionibus imponebat.*" I must repeat the sentence. "*Semper enim perfectissimas clausulas actionibus imponebat,*" — there is

matter for meditation. I have given it twice only ; but if the reader should repeat it twenty times, he will hardly have done it justice. If the words could be put in type and stamped upon the brain, happy would that brain be. Let us look into the sense ; thus it will be,—“For he always rounded his actions well off, and finished them with a complete close.” This was the secret of his success. But, suppose for actions we say locutions, speeches,—and apply the rule to conversation, composition, oratory,—will it not serve as well ? May it not account as fully for the success of Cicero in the one case, as for that of Cæsar in the other ? Ay, troth, I believe it. The great rule of talking, the mechanical one I mean, is the same as that of reading. Finish every sentence, if it be a short one ; and, if long, every member of it, in a breath. Bring them to a close together ; and then again collect yourself for what is to follow. Practise this for a time, and you will acquire the skill of closing your periods, and every member of them, neatly and completely. You will never be crowding and confusing them ; each will do its own duty, and stand off well and distinctly one from another. For this purpose the mind must be raised in the first instance to a certain pitch, though by no means a painful one, of attentiveness. It must collect itself, if need be, from indolence and remissness. Every sentence should be begun smartly, so as to be carried through as it were by the first impulse ; it should be closed in a predestined point, which, to a mind habituated to this method, will present itself as occasion requires. It should end like a bar of music, “congruing to a full and natural close” ; and, ending so, it will end also in the satisfaction both of the speaker and the listener ; and illustrate the success of the man, “*qui semper perfectissimas clausulas actionibus imponebat.*”

This is an important rule,—the rule of *divide et im-*

pera, — a rule as true in talk as ever it was in politics ; and there is another scarcely inferior to it in value, — use expedition. There is often much wisdom in words, — a soul of philosophy in symbols ; it may be worth while to dwell a little on this one, to see what we can extract out of it. Use expedition. Expedition, I believe, meant originally extrication, — so did despatch, — then they came, both of them, by “a strange, harmonious inclination,” to signify achievement ; but as achievement, or, to give its other name, expedition, was found generally to depend upon energetic quickness, so much so as to be almost identical with it, therefore they were all accepted alike in the popular nomenclature ; despatch, expedition, and quickness, — all three were taken in one and the same sense ; one soul of meaning was breathed into them, and, as instinct is truth, so this common-sense designation, this instinctive consciousness of nominal propriety, needs no argument to prove it true.

We may infer, then, as our corollary, that generally to be expeditive one must be quick and energetic also. This is true in almost all things, but most palpably so in conversation. Take the difference of nations for an example. The French pronunciation, from the genius of the language, is rapid and expeditive ; that of the Germans, on the contrary, is heavy and laborious, — of the Dutch, perhaps, still more so ; and what is the effect of this variety in the conversation of each respective country ? Notoriously that the degrees of quickness and effectiveness are correlative ; that the difference of rapidity in pronunciation may be taken as an exponent of the difference in force, animation, persuasiveness, and point among the three national speakers.

Give any subject, and a Frenchman, in general, will make more of it, will treat it more forcibly and impressively, in five minutes, than a German in double the time,

or a Dutchman in his whole life. But this, it will be said, requires proof. Well, the only proof that we can have is our own experience, or that of others. And here I think authorities agree, national prejudice and perverseness being first discounted. But, again, I may be asked, Are you not putting the effect for the cause? Is not this *torrens dicendi copia*, this harlequin accomplishment of tongue, the result rather than the origin of the French vivacity and intelligence? Is not the order given by Juvenal—*ingenium velox, audacia perdita, sermo promptus*—juster and more natural as it stands than it would be if it were inverted? I judge not. In the first place this vivacity is very general wherever French is the popular language, spoken as it is by people in all degrees of difference in habit, temperament, and institutions, not to say of climate. The French peasant, to be sure, walks in wooden shoes, but his language, in recompense, moves along lightly, trippingly on the tongue. Whereas the condition of the German is the converse of this in both cases. He is not cumbered with his footgear, his corporal comings and goings are unembarrassed, but in the march of his conversation he is wooden-shod, and therefore intolerant of haste, jealous of all despatch, and this through the whole region of Teutonism,—*ubique gentium, — quocunque sub axe, — nusquam non.*

I could wind this subject about, give me but the leisure, like an everlasting screw. It would hold me through all time. But the day is shortening, and the shadows are frowning upon my delay in their lengthened darkness. And moreover despatch, as it is a surpassing quality in tonguecraft, so neither in pencraft is it without its due praise. And so I must bring my subject nearer home, leaving the French and Germans to settle their difference as they best may.

Of course every man will judge these things after his

own experience ; as for mine, I can only say that I never in my life knew a good talker who was not also a rapid one. It is not in nature to be otherwise. A drawling, listless enunciation is sure, by an unfailing sympathy, to affect the understanding and general faculties after its own kind. Rapidity of utterance presumes a wakeful, quick, active intelligence ; an interest in one's subject ; a warmth and glow of spirit ; an inquisitive, enterprizing, communicative disposition. All these things are essential to a high quality of colloquial power ; it can hardly exist without them ; and they, again, are scarcely ever found unless in conjunction with a rapid delivery, and, as I believe firmly, in dependence to a certain extent upon it. It is true, undoubtedly, that these qualities are often the causes rather than the effects of a quick, decisive utterance. The fact is, that they may be, and will be, as it happens, either one or the other. As the two are almost invariably found together, whichever is first suggested will start the other also, — that is, to practised intelligences ; as for a novice, an attempt to talk rapidly, without any rule for his rapidity or fund to talk from, would be a project about as hopeful as my own attempt to take algebra by assault, — to see through Euclid at a *coup d'œil*.

All the world over, natural as well as moral, in physics as well as in metaphysics, rapidity is closely related to heat, and heat to light. Here is a grand advantage of a rapid utterance. It stirs the spirit from laziness into excitement ; it raises a gentle genial glow over the whole nervous system. A succession of quick, decisive sentences, freely and easily delivered, will often kindle the mind into a luminous heat, like so many blasts from a pair of bellows. Enthusiasm, it is pretty generally agreed, is an indispensable postulate of greatness. For great things it is required in a great degree, — for little *things in a less and almost imperceptible degree* ; but still

it is requisite for success in all. And so intimately is the idea of enthusiasm blended with that of rapidity in word and action, that to hear of a slow, dull, heavy enthusiast would seem as strange as to be told of a frozen spark, or a flaming icicle. We should repudiate it as a flat contradiction in terms. If, then, you would temper yourself to the vivifying warmth, the fine glow of enthusiasm,—that is, if you would take the first step towards greatness of mind,—cultivate rapidity, and in proportion as you succeed you will be so much the nearer to your object.

I do not mean by this that every one who has the power to talk rapidly should always be using it,—should be eternally talking against time. There is no need of this, any more than a perfect mistress of execution on an instrument should always be hurrying over the keys ; on the contrary, in conversation, as in music, it is the great advantage of rapid executors that they can vary their time, adjust their tones and cadences to the exigencies of their subject, whereas all that a slow, heavy talker or performer can do is merely to repeat his tediousness in the same drawling strain. Again, such people are always at a dead pull,—they are never well off ; while the first impulse where a man has energy enough and decision enough to start briskly, to commence every sentence forwardly, will carry him along to the end of it. He is not conscious of any drag, he is going down an inclined plane, till the moment that he stops again to collect himself. On every account, then, if you would be well in society or solitude, work yourself, quicken yourself, into rapidity.

But how is this to be done ? Alas ! I can only refer you to your own energy and self-will, and to Virgil, if you know him, or care for him. Witness his fine lines, “*Pater ipse colendi haud facilem esse viam voluit,*” and those that follow. However, I can tell you that I was myself at a comparatively late age as great a lout in the

management of my tongue as one could readily find, and yet I despaired not, but succeeded against despair, and yet against hope too ; take this for your consolation, and do as I did. Read, recite, rave, if you please ; any thing to give yourself the tongue of a ready speaker. Wind yourself to a high pitch. Make yourself instinct with the spirit of the orators, poets, historians, or dramatic persons that you represent. Temper the coldness of your clay with a little borrowed fire. Be strong, and faint not. But, whatever you are about, do it for the time being as if you had been born for no other purpose. And, above all, despise not the day of little things, as many fantastic fools pretend to do. Consider that there are many things in daily practice of no use or significance in themselves, except insomuch as they prepare us for other things beyond them. And this is one. If you were stiff of limb, and your dancing-master should recommend you to supple yourself by a course of gymnastic exercise, you would probably say nothing in objection ; or, if your fencing-master should tell you that he could do nothing for you in his art, unless you first acquired a degree of steadfastness, and self-command, and pliability, by use of the lunging practice for half an hour of every day, you would do it at once. Now only weigh the accomplishments one against the other. Few people dance so often as once a week ; and, if they fence, the chances are that it is still less frequently. Whereas, in regard of language, we are talking animals ; and, as Cicero says, it is a shame that we should not be studious to excel in that one quality, whence we have our human preëminence, our dominion over beasts ; but so it is, that the noblest faculty, and the one wherein the most might be done by care, we are too apt to fancy that we may leave it to itself, and that it will come as it were by chance.

For the attainment of quick diction, the next point to be observed, after the exercises above stated, is the practice of self-control in conversation. There is one paramount rule for the beginner,—attend to it through a short series, and the work is done. The practice, after a few lessons' experience, will grow imperceptibly into a habit. Do not speak till you are sure; first think your sentence,—the pause need only be a momentary one,—and then give utterance to it pointedly, decidedly, and as the lawyers say, *uno flatu*; no exceptions can then be taken, no matter though the sentence suggested be of the simplest, one that might come and go of itself. Still you should practise the rule for the rule's sake; the simpler the subject the easier the practice upon it, and the better hope and more encouragement for the beginner.

Such, if I apprehend them aright, are the elements of the colloquial faculty. I have endeavoured, rudely indeed, and by no means regularly, to analyze them. I will now give them again in their sum, synthetically. First, there is perfect ease, or, if you will, acquiescence; this is the very breath of the nostrils,—the only atmosphere where the faculty can live, and move, and have its being.

Next, and near akin to the last mentioned, is the absence of all ambition and affectation,—the utter disregard of self-distinction,—the waiver of scholarship. This is a hard lesson; but you will remain a very poor scholar until you have mastered it. No man can be a philosopher short of indifference to fine things,—but philosophy is high ground. However, you must be a poor fool indeed, if you cannot rise above the affectation of even fine words. Again, there is cordiality,—expansiveness of heart,—kindly sympathy,—this also is essential; without it conversation is but too apt to be little better than a kind of *social duelling*, with words for weapons, tongues to serve

as two-edged swords. Further still, there is rapidity of diction. On this I have said too much already ; for what remains, *j'en fais grace*, — let the reader supply it. Last is the discipline of the beginner, — the practice of forethought, — the prefiguration in the mind of what it is about committing to the tongue ; a good and praiseworthy providence. I may have omitted something ; if so, my memory must bear the blame of it ; but it is no such perilous omission. Let the reader but learn and do what is here set down for him, and it will be enough for his purpose, or rather for my own promise ; for the development, that is, by conversation, of whatever may be in him.

For all these qualities of course are only instruments ; and instruments are vain things, unless they have subjects to work upon. There must be a fountain somewhere, — a sufficient power of water ; or, otherwise, all the channels that one can cut for irrigation and other uses are but lost labor. It behoves us, then, to have a reservoir of knowledge, — a reservoir to be filled in the first instance, and supplied afterwards by the use of books, by observation, and all other possible ways and means. But of this elsewhere.

The growth of the mind in many respects is analogous to that of the body. They require both of them a full diet, a wide range, an open atmosphere, and freedom from all unnecessary restraint. They are alike depraved by the habitual use of stimulants, and dwarfed by over-exertion, — neither can be kept on essences. They require their food in the gross, some part of the bulk for nutriment, and the other for rejection, that the digestive power may not always be kept on the strain, but be relieved occasionally by the presentation to it of what it does not choose to work upon. Moreover, the growth of each is capricious and startful, often making a sudden

push from no apparent motive, and always slow in the main, though rapid in appearance at some particular seasons. The fact is, that, in body and mind both, we judge of our growth by the dereliction of our accustomed habits. With these, of course, we are familiar, and, if we outgrow them by a hair's breadth, we are conscious of it at once. When we find that they are become short, scanty, and ridiculous to us, we lay unction to our souls upon our aggrandizement, — we flatter ourselves that we are growing great, *à vue d'œil*, — and greatly are we deluded. This is easily explained. While we are ascending a steep hill, every yard or two that we gain seems to us a considerable elevation, looking down as we do immediately upon it ; whereas, to people at a distance, and to ourselves on our further advance, the difference would be little more than insignificance.

But, again, the mind is not only like the body, slow of progress, despite its fiery faculty, but it has also an infirmity beyond the body, in that it is sometimes retrogressive ; subject, I speak it with sorrow, to backslding. It is like the breakers in the flow, — you will see one burst on bravely, breasting the wide beach, and cresting it triumphantly. Look how it throws its spray right onward, like a standard-bearer hurling his ensign among the thick of the enemy in the contemptuous confidence of its recovery. Surely, you would say, it can think of nothing so dastardly as a retreat ; when, lo ! it falls back as suddenly as it had advanced, and leaves its acquisition bare, till it shall have gathered itself up afresh for the assault. Even so. The particular waves precipitate themselves forward, and retire as precipitately again, while the main tide, slowly, silently, and surely, is moving on. It is but little to attain, unless by dwelling upon our attainment we can familiarize ourselves with it, and so become qualified to make the most of it. Otherwise

we are in the condition of the raw Canadian settler. He journeys forth, he leaves behind him his father's home, his familiars, his old habits, and all the things of his childhood ; he gets into a new region, a strange scenery, a wilderness in the far country. He looks around him. " And this is all my own ; how glorious ! how wonderful ! Happy that I am here ; here by my own enterprise, and not among the home lagsters ! " But, my good friend, anticipation is not truth, — no, not even by anticipation. To be sure you have a sight of these things, — they are yours to see, — but sight is soon satisfied ; and, as for the use of them, that being the main thing, they are not yours to use, nor to have, nor to enjoy, until you shall have made them yours by labor ; cleared them, wrought them, cultivated them, sowed them, harvested them, been conversant as an indweller among them. At present you have only an inchoate interest in them, no absolute property.

In nearly all my intellectual acquisitions, such as they are, I have felt this to be the case ; and I presume that every other self-instructor has been in the same predicament. Repeatedly, in the course of my lucubrations, I have caught a glimpse of what I took to be an important truth. I have followed it out, and found that it was indeed a true lamp of the understanding, and no false glimmerer. I have been in rapture at the discovery. I could have clapped my hands and hugged myself for very joy, fancying that a mighty mystery had been revealed to me, and that I was in possession of an instrument powerful enough to solve the whole problem of mental perfectibility. In oratory, thought, composition, and other faculties, — in the various methods that I have tried for their prosecution, some such delusion as this has frequently occurred to me ; and yet it was no delusion at all, except *only as to the degree.* I had indeed exaggerated in my

mind the efficacy of such instruments. I had committed perhaps by thousands instead of tens ; but, for at, there was truth at the bottom of the opinion. Curious undoubtedly they were, and so I have proved

My grand mistake was this : I fancied that it was enough to know, to recognize a principle, and I sel-took the trouble to apply it. I was at no pains to bring it home, — to familiarize it in my inmost mind, — like much of it, and entertain it there constantly. I considered, that, with the most perfect weapon in the world, it is only use and habit that can give us the skill of it. Lord Mansfield, I think, has said that learning is an instrument of which the effect depends largely on the strength and dexterity of its possessor ; this may be said as truly, that is, with perfect truth, than learning and all faculties whatsoever.

If I had been earlier aware of this principle, I should have saved myself an infinity of disappointment. Again and again I have seen, or seemed to see, that I had to follow the guidance of such and such an intellect, and it would be sure to lead me on to eminence. Half a dozen such devices at different times occurred to me ; and yet after I had acknowledged some time, and practised them a little, I used to say to my surprise that I had made no such great way as I expected. It puts me in mind of the bulletins issued during the last illness of the late king. During a period of a month or so, we were told from day to day that he was better, and again better, and still better, — till at length the accumulation of all these betternesses, if he had only been substantial, he must assuredly have been the best monarch by far that was ever set up in England ; a conclusion, I take it, of somewhat doubtful authenticity ; for, indeed, it is an undisputed historical fact that he died at last. And so it was with me. I

saw a light here, and another great light there, and so on successively, till I ought, according to theory, have been a centre of luminousness ; and yet I was a very imperfect creature after all. As in my former illustration, where I seemed to be gaining ground most by the outbreak of each particular wave, I was in fact making but little progress ; and where it could not be observed by the eye that I was advancing at all, that is, in the flow of the general tide, I was getting on slowly indeed, but steadily and securely.

I expected, as I have said, that my first acquaintance with these truths and methods would produce the same results as a long course of familiarity with them,—that they would be as much at my command as if I had acquired their mastery by continued use and practice ; but this could not be. Light, indeed, may strike us instantaneously ; but it is only by long shining that the blessed sun himself can fill the atmosphere, through the mediation of that light, with his warm, and vivifying, and procreative energy. The delay was distrustful and vexatious to me, but it involved a good lesson. I found from it the necessity of carrying out into practice regularly and sustainedly whatever we approve in principle, whether it belong to morality or to intellect. From the mere recognition of a truth, all that we get is an impression upon the mind ; and, if nothing else be done upon it, that impression, the oftener that it is made, the feebler and less sensible will it become, till at last its efficacy is lost, and it is unheeded altogether. For instance, if I am living in a place where I see a funeral pass by me every half-hour, at the first sight I observe it somewhat attentively, shake my head, think it is a sad thing for somebody, and then return to my occupation. There, indeed, an impression is made, but it is only momentary ; I do not care to prosecute the train of thought suggested by it ; another passes

on after, a third, a fourth,—each succeeding impression is fainter, till at last I take little more note of a funeral than of the dead wall opposite to me. Whereas, when we reason upon a truth, and trace it to its consequences, and act upon it, it becomes habitual to the mind; and habit, so far from being weakened, as casual impressions are, by frequency of repetition, is strengthened and renewed by it. As for example: if the sight of that funeral procession had set me upon the meditation of my mortality,—if I had learned from it to regard all worldly hopes, and passions, and opinions as so many idle dreams,—if it had brought me to reason myself into the conviction that my first duty was this, so to live as in the hourly expectation of death and the immediate hope of heaven. If my reason had wrought out so much of good thoughts and holy purposes from the solemn spectacle, here would have been the groundwork of habit; the more frequently I recurred to those meditations, the easier their practice, and the stronger would their habit have become; till at last, if I had carried them to the utmost, I must have been conformed in spirit to the true standard of Christianity. And so in the things of intellect. I was aware early enough of certain principles and rules, but I seldom meditated them, or practised them, or wrought them out. I was much longer than I need have been in familiarizing myself with their use. I did not, as I should have done, make them the channels, the veins, through which the daily and hourly course of my intellectual life should circulate. Had I done so, I might by this time have been a great man.

We have had enough of speculation, and now to matters of personal concernment. I have given a full account of my sporting mania, how it arose out of nothing, and how it burnt for a while right fiercely, and how it was checked at last by a double accident,—the loss of

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my gun, and the departure of my chief associate, with the consequent break-up of our whole establishment,—dogs, kennel, and boat,—and all our brilliant anticipations into the bargain. The edge, however, had worn off,—the bloom was gone from the flower,—and this violent death of my sportsmanship was perhaps but the anticipation of a natural one, and that not very far in the distance.

And thus I was left again to my devices. Something I must do, for I was neither dolt nor dullard. If I could not find myself an employment, I must make one, and that I did speedily. The wheel has gone full swing, and 't will come back; so it is written in the play, and so my experience made it good on this occasion. From my gun, dogs, and all their appurtenances, I fell back upon my books, making a great merit with myself of this my duplicity of desertion. As for the ordinary routine of the school, I had lost my place there long since. An idleness of a year's duration was a wide gap for me to fill up. While I was at a stand, my competitors for the front rank had been advancing steadily, and there I found myself lying in the abject rear, like the trampled horse of Shakspeare. I was too proud to contend where I had erewhile been acknowledged as superior. I could not bring myself to take my proper place in the fourth or fifth rank of scholarship; and, as I must either have done that or abandoned the race altogether, I preferred the latter part of the alternative. I retired, like the defeated bull in Virgil, to segregation and solitude, by way of escaping from the victorious rivalry of my fellows, and the ignominy of my discomfiture. I left our accustomed paths of scholarship, and betook myself to strange reading, where competition was none, and the sense of my inferiority was no longer forced upon me. Juvenal and Persius, Quintilian, and, to confound me utterly, after

irst had sufficiently perplexed me, Lycophron, — were my daily diet. The last I chose merely because I had heard that it was the hardest Greek book fancying, probably, that if I could only master it should make light work of any thing else ; and, of course fancy it was, — a notable piece of wisdom.

With all its hopefulness, with all its fair promise of success, the experiment failed. In the first place I was and wrongheaded, with no better judgment than that of a boy to guide me ; and, secondly, I was too young and ignorant to appreciate grammatical niceties, much too much to take any wide view in the field of criticism. A critic should stand on high ground. He should have his feet firmly fixed in the ground, and then climb up the ascent, from base to summit. He should be familiar with details before he attempts a general survey. My plan, then, was preposterous. I pored and toiled over it for hours of every day, to little purpose. I had no trade nor comforter ; I was a mere groper in darkness, and at last, between despair and disgust, left Lyceum to the bookworms, — the only critics that can tolerate him.

Thus I was foiled at all points. My reputation was ruined, and I suffered my occupation to go after it. I did not do much out of school, or, at least, I took a long way, and in school I did not choose to do nothing. I was good for nothing, either as an esoteric or exoteric scholar. All that was now left me was the philosophy of the fox, and, availing myself of that, I determined to despise the learning that was above my reach. I was a piece of cunning dissimulation, an artificial

It is a vulgar error among boys, that talent is no quality, — that it will do nothing upon compulsion, and that every thing at pleasure. Consequently, a flashy boy is regarded by them as a much more brilliant light, altogether more admirable, than a sound, studious

scholar. They look up to the eccentricity of the comet rather than the steady effulgence of the sun. Of this I had some notion, and I availed myself of the prejudice. I assumed the airs of the adventurer, who endeavours to pass himself for a prince, travelling incognito. *Scientiam dissimulando simulavi.* What little learning I might have I concealed as studiously as a thief would bide his lantern. Or rather, like the finder of hidden treasure, by suppressing the truth of my acquirements I magnified their opinion most prodigiously.

In school, or with my tutor, whenever a question was asked me, be it as simple as it might, I pretended to muse over it, in all the simple ignorance of a child out of the nursery. I was the ready prompter of my neighbours ; but when I had occasion to answer for myself I persisted in dogged silence ; or, if I said any thing, it was only to stultify the subject by my “idle comments,” by the wilful absurdity of my answers. For instance, suppose the question asked me, “What is the early history of Romulus ?” Answer, “He was found by Pharaoh’s daughter among the rushes, and he was the wolf’s son, and built the seven hills, and shot some vultures there, and killed his brother because he could not leap over his wall.” This was the trickery of affectation,—the shift of disappointed vanity.

“Pauper videri Cinna vult, et est pauper”; or, as Horace has it, I would fain appear among my fellows *contemptæ dominus splendidior rei.* Such foolery should have been corrected at once, *a posteriori*; but this was never done,—and so, in my allowed license, I became not only an idler myself but the cause of idleness in many others.

The innocence, and simplicity, and integrity of boyhood is a favorite theme of poetasters and blue ladies; and, to be sure, the image that they give us is a pretty

thing to look at, but, for myself, I should be much better pleased if they would show me the original of their copy. Every body talks of such things as they do of ghosts and hobgoblins, but no one can point them out. Now, I grieve to say it, for divers strong reasons, I am somewhat skeptical as to their existence,—their general existence I mean,—and even as to the possibility of it. Spiritual, genuine virtue is the result only of reflection; this, of course, is as high above the boy as the seventh heavens. Worldly virtue, or, as it is commonly called, good conduct, arises in the first place out of forethought,—the faculty of looking forward to consequences,—and, again, from manliness of mind, the quality that strengthens us against temptation. These are both foreign to the boy. If he walks straightly and uprightly it is only for a moment, from a sudden impulse,—just as we see a drunken man keep his line occasionally for a few paces; but he has no force of morality, no soul of righteousness to sustain him; it is only by putting him in a groove, by keeping him in strict discipline, that you can hold him properly to his course. And, again, opinion has comparatively but little influence upon him; his prosperity is not, as in the man, put in pledge, and given over as the hostage of his good conduct; he may act meanly, and dastardly, and knavishly, and the thing is soon forgotten. The truth is, that this is an illusion supported only by the self-indulging laziness of parents. They take the natural innocency of boyhood for granted, and on that presumption relieve themselves but too often from all strict solicitude about morals; and if, consequently, as he very likely will, the boy should prove a blackguard, they cry out against it as a depravity against nature,—as the boy's fault and their own misfortune; whereas, if truth were spoken, those two words would change places. *The heart of man is wicked, and that of*

the child is still more ; the taint of original sin is, and must be, strongest at the fountain-head. An infant can have no notions of morality, nor a child, until they are taught it. Till then it is a thief, selfish, sensualist, dissembler, liar ; all the good that comes of it must be first wrought into it. To rely on innocence, and waive in any degree moral instruction, if it were not a most flagrant sin, would be a flagrant folly ; as much so as to profess faith, and take no care of good works.

Shortly after my renunciation of scholarship I became a professed lover of the turf ; partly, perhaps, to humor my own genuine fancy, and partly to give a coloring of truth to my book-hating affectation. This, with most of its votaries, is an engrossing passion,—time, talk, and attention, fortune, honor, and character, have been often utterly absorbed by it,—few can dabble in it but they are drowned at last. I question, nevertheless, whether it ever took a stronger hold on its most devoted subject than it did then on me, for the time that the fit lasted. If a master of fox-hounds had been a hero to me while my hunting mania was on me, the owner of a racing-stud was now, in my doting fancy, little less than a deity. No conqueror in the old Olympic chariot-races was ever higher in his countrymen's favor than the winner of the Derby or Oaks in my own scale of elevation.

True, I knew no more of race-horses than a savage in New South Wales. I had no more interest in any such event than what I created for myself by my crown and halfcrown bets,—but this was all the better,—I was so much the stronger zealot from my lack of knowledge,—*omne ignotum pro magnifico*. Horse-races, like flashy pictures and great personages, are best seen, or at all events most admired, from a distance. Many a man has been a turf-enthusiast in theory, who, if he had gone only a hundred yards to see a real race, would have turned

back disappointed. This would have been my own case, as I have since often proved it.

While the fever was at its height, I and two or three other youngsters of the like spirit used to take a paper regularly during the racing season. Not for the sake of politics,—for how should they concern us?—nor wars and rumors of wars,—for what were they to our one single passion?—but for the love of the sporting intelligence, crowded, surely in a way unworthy of its dignity, into a corner of the last column. The particulars there given of Newmarket and Tattersall's I used to hurry through with as much excitement of interest as if I had been reading the report of a lawsuit involving my whole fortune. I expected the great days, the fatal decisions of the Derby, Oaks, and Leger, with the same solemnity and observance as the devout Mahometan looks forward to the festivals of his religion; but Ascot, O Ascot! that was the thrilling time, the one week of the two-and-fifty. Happy, as I stood at the long wall, watching the perpetual pomp of by-goers, happy in my estimation were the rustic wagonfarers, the Colls and Sues, brav-ing it in their holyday attire, shaming their tardy wain by the volubility of their tongues, and lying there loverwise, under a grove of their own planting, sheltered umbra-geously by a canopy of fresh branches.

“Quā quercus ingens albaque populus
Umbram hospitatem consociare amant
Ramis.”

Thus renewing the miracle of Shakspeare, and carrying the wood of Birnam to the dry, desolate regions of Ascot. Happier still the smart dennet or stanhope-driver,—but, O, happiest of all, beyond all terms of happiness, the studious youths of Oxford, denizens of Christchurch or Magdalen, as they

“Dashed along at random,
In whiskey, phæton, one-horse shay, gig, curricle, or tandem.”

Then would envy and repiningness come over me. I would have given all the learning that I was ever worth for an hour of their four-in-hand preëminence.

This was no better than madness, — a common example of it, I admit, but yet a real one; for how otherwise shall we designate the state of mind that gives itself wholly up to a perverse bias, and is utterly unable to reduce its gigantic desires to the dwarfish proportion of their objects? And it was not a creative madness either, such as we sometimes see in men of high genius, but a destroying and wasting one. As for my former passion for field sports, I have no reason to regret it. The mind must have its Sabbath, and if it make that Sabbath, or some part of it, a holyday, a day of gamesomeness, it will be none the worse for it. The man who is always reading on, and never resting, is in fact running away from his acquirements; he is carrying too forward a head, as they say of hounds that are too fast and high-couraged for the pack. He should pause upon his attainments, and suffer his main body to come up. In the law phrase, he should take the accounts of his knowledge with rests, and the sum will infallibly at last be all the greater.

But the word gaming, and its correlatives, in French, German, Latin, and all other languages that I know, except the Greek, is a mere misnomer of the thing that it pretends to express. There is no gamesomeness about it. It is the hardest work that a man can do, — exhausting and enervating him, body and mind, beyond any other. It is exciting, but its excitement is that of a prolonged dram; heating, but its heat is that of a fever, consuming inwardly without warming. Other sports are quickening and inspiriting in proportion to their excitement, — but this is not so; on the contrary, all the *thoughts, habits, and hopes* of the confirmed gamester

run at last into the infernal pool,—the hell of black, boiling, flaming pitch,—of moody, moping, self-tormented, one-ideal melancholy.

As for myself, in this respect, a wise Providence, rather than any prudence of my own, has befriended me. I have never gambled yet but on a small scale. But the same principle serves us, whether we compute by units or by millions. I stood on the crater's brink ; but even from there I could see plainly enough, and horribly, the workings of the gulf below me,—the wailing and gnashing of teeth, the groans, shrieks, and execrations of the lost spirits. Thankful am I, most truly, that, in spite of the proverb, my experience was bought so cheap, and has yet proved so good an article.

But, with all my general thoughtlessness, I had still my occasional misgivings. Sometimes, indeed, I would fain abandon myself to the philosophy of Aristippus, and, upon his advice, suffer all my habits to hang loose, that life itself might sit easily ; living at random, and taking no more thought of the morrow than I did the moment that I was born.

But this is not the rule of happiness, nor has it ever been so since Adam was exiled out of Paradise. Time is a cross, captious old soul, and is sure to revenge the smallest slight that we may be so ill-advised as to put upon him. The still, small voice of conscience would be whispering in my ear ; in the wakefulness of the night, in the uneasy tossings of the dawn, it would haunt me like a spectre. In vain did I look for comfort from the words of Solomon, that the labors of the student, like all other things, are vanity and vexation ; flattering myself that, as the end of both was the same, of the fool and the wise man, if I could remain where I was, as a sort of middle term between them, I should fare better than either. *Conscience is the best arbiter, and she would not be put*

off so flimsily. By this time I had exceeded all fair limits of repose, and fallen into the mental stagnation of idleness ; that stagnation, like all others, generates out of itself a host of swarming, stinging, agonizing creatures ; it “ breeds perverse all monstrous, all prodigious things.” It bred them in me, and I began to feel the maggots at work within me. Idleness, it just occurs to me, is the devil’s dam. I have often heard of that personage, but could never learn who she might be,—but this I am now assured is right genealogy.

I well remember a passage in my life, an epoch, I should rather call it, of my intellect, dated about this time. I had just got a new number of the Sporting Magazine. It was one for the month of July, rich, of course, rich as the season itself, in racing intelligence, both from the capital and provinces. I put it in my pocket, and hurried down with it from the bookseller’s to evening school, gloating on the anticipation of its enjoyment after the brief purgatory of a lesson of Virgil. The lesson was despatched in due course, but it so happened that some four or five boys, or fellows, as we called them, were summoned afterwards to be read over — to attend, that is, at the recital of their exercises — by the head-master in full assembly, by way of honor, and in token of excellence. I was condemned therefore to await the end of their Castalian effusions, and to defer my own draughts from another and a far different Hippocrene, one much more gratifying to my taste. However, I sat out the process, as need was, and then away to the sixth-form bench in the playing fields, to blend my spirit with my book, and hear the tidings of Newmarket. In half an hour I had devoured the whole, from capital to corollary ; and at any other time, my appetite growing with what it fed upon, I should have gone through it again, collecting

at leisure the gleanings of my first hasty harvest. But this time I was content without any such repetition.

There was an influence upon me that I felt, but could not understand, — a cloud gathering over my spirits, a darkening of the light within me. I laid my book aside, threw myself back on my seat, and resigned my fancy to the course of musing idleness.

It was a delicious midsummer's evening. The atmosphere was an ocean of glory, the sky one blue firmament, the river lying out and glittering in his sinuous length, like a snake basking in the sun ; and all things as still as though nature in the fulness of her joy had suppressed her breathings, content to commune with her Creator in mystic quietism.

This is a scene that in society makes the heart glad, and in solitude disposes it to sadness. In both cases it is full, full to overflow, with its feelings ; but, when we are with a friend, those feelings are thrown off as they arise, by the interchange of thoughts, words, and sympathies ; whereas, if we be alone, they have no issue but in devotion ; lacking that, they fall back upon their fountain, and gradually deepen into darkness ; then there is no other relief but only by the effusion of tears.

Something of this melancholy was now upon me. I felt that I was sinking under it. I had been excited by the spirit-stirring sketches of the Sporting Magazine, and my depression consequently, when it once came on, was so much the deeper and more sudden. I was awakened strangely, and for any thing that I could see causelessly, to self-consciousness. The false lights that had been so long dancing before my eyes, and dazzling me by their vainglory, had vanished like a dream. I was disenchanted of their delusion, — I looked forward to the essences of things, and the darkness of distress and despondency was before me. The ghosts of my countless follies

and vanities rose up in judgment against me, “not as single spies, but in battalions.” The exhibitions, too, that I had just witnessed, the recitals that I had heard of exercises by boys, once scarce worthy to be my competitors, but now far and far above me, added a shade to my gloominess. I can hardly tell why I should have been so sensitive on this point. I was never remarkably distinguished but by my memory, the lowest in most estimates of all the intellectual virtues ; my scholarship and my general talent had never stood out in strong relief from among my fellows ; I had but little in the way of eminence to lose, but still I clung to that little, and was reluctant to part from it.

I looked around me. Every thing that I saw was beautiful, and lovely, and good in its kind. Earth, air, and water were teeming with productiveness. Not a leaf, not a blade, not a living creature, but was fulfilling its uses, and speeding forward, as if on the express mission of the Almighty. And I only was there as one that is not, — worse than that, as a mere cumberer of the ground. What a glorious world do I live in, and how vilely am I disgracing it !

Such were my sentiments, or such at least was the sting of self-reproach involved in them. I sat for some minutes enveloped in their gloom ; but the very contrast of thoughts so strange to me surprised, and, as it were, startled me into an effort. I got up and endeavoured to collect my spirits, and strain up my nerves by energy of action and gesticulation. I looked at my Sporting Magazine, but *oh ! quam non simili intuitu !* I could have stamped it into the ground, as a gamester might do his betting-book, the instrument and record of his ruin. But I am yet young ; I have years enough at my command ; come, go to, I will be wise.

But what was to be the manner of my wisdom ? I

could not return to my canons of Greek criticism, like a dog to his vomiting. My competitors were too far ahead of me. Mathematics, again, were just as hopeless, — what was I to do ? A thought occurred to me. There was the man who taught B—— French and Italian. Why should I not learn of him ? That would be of real use to me, — nobody could doubt it ; and so I should be breaking fresh ground, instead of dabbling in what had long since disgusted me.

I took up a stone, and, aiming it at a huge tree close by me, As sure as I hit that tree, I will be a French scholar before six months are over my head. This was gallantly done ; one of the few acts of my life that challenges admiration, that sets me above the dead level of humanity.

I was as good as my word. I addicted myself to a French master, and I will venture to say that he had never a more earnest or assiduous scholar. From morning to night I read French, recited French, talked of it, thought of it, of that and nothing else, — except on the spur of necessity, — and most probably dreamt of it. I found, indeed, that it was no such light matter as I had expected. People had told me that to a Latin scholar it would come of course, that he might run and learn, that he had only to open his eyes, and must needs then be enlightened, — but they were much mistaken. I have studied the language thoroughly, and I hold it to be at least as difficult as Latin to people who know nothing of either. The difference being mainly, that we learn Latin, in general, while we are yet children, and French, more commonly, in adolescence ; hence, as we set out from a larger capital, and with greater power, we master the last more readily. However, in spite of this truth, if truth it be, I became a better French scholar in four months than I had become a Latin one in eight years ;

partly from the advantage just mentioned, but principally, I take it, because I worked upon the impulse from within, and not the pressure from without. What I read, that I remembered ; what I remembered, that I ruminated ; what I ruminated, that I realized ; I took a fast hold, and never left it till I had secured my subject.

This was a good hit,—a right good one. I do n't know that I ever spent four months of my life to better purpose. In the first place there was the excellent use of the thing itself,—a thing that every man above daily hand-labor must have, or pass through life at a disadvantage. For, even suppose him never to use it,—never to utter a French word, or hear it spoken, or look into a French book,—still there is the consciousness of the power, the sense of equality ; or, rather, the no-sense of inferiority. That is the great thing ; the assuagement of the rankling pain, the extraction of the barbed arrow.

I remember, when a boy, I was fourteen years old before I could either ride or dance. Since that time, I have been as much on horseback as most men ; but, if any one on whom it depended were to tell me at the present day that I was never to be in a saddle again, I would not give five pounds to reverse the sentence ; so easily is a want kept down when its cravingness has been once satisfied. But, while the consciousness of it was upon me, as long as I knew my inexpertness, so long I felt it most bitterly, and shamefully, and deeply. I was perpetually in a dread lest I should be thrown into some situation or other where my insufficiency would appear, and my shame with it ; for these are great points with children,—aye, and with boys too, and with very young men to boot. Therefore it is that we should be careful to make up our complement in education, lest, if there be a point left open, mischief should assail us there. The *very word* “accomplishments” implies this and little be-

side. We should do like the wild Indians, who distend the coats of their stomachs with mere inert, dead matter, — clay, leaves, and such like ; not for the sake of digestion or assimilation, but merely to keep the wolf off, — to prevent the pangs of emptiness, — to fill the “aching void.”

But beside this use, and it was no slight one, there was the exercise, not merely of memory and other faculties, but of patience and perseverance. This, so much as I had been unstrung before, was of excellent service to me. I recovered my tone ; I vindicated all my past energies ; I found the maxim true, that, in morals and in intellect, nothing is impossible to a determined will. *Quodcunque imperavit sibi animus obtinuit.*

There is another great advantage to the Englishman in learning French. It may be called, by a superior right, *la langue*, the tongue, the French tongue, inasmuch as it exercises that organ incomparably more than our own language. English, as spoken, is, perhaps, of all dialects in the world, the most accentless, pointless, and meaningless. From these qualities, or defects of quality rather, it has been variously likened by foreigners. Some have compared it to the whistling of birds ; others, from the predominance of the *s*, to the continued hissing of red-hot iron in water. Madame de Staël, by a somewhat violent stretch of imagination, as it seems to me, likens it to the monotonous sound of the surge breaking on the sea-shore ; and there is a general consent among them all, that an English sentence in sound, from the want of emphasis and accent, is nothing more than one long, drawling, extended word.

In this the truth is overcharged by the caricature, — but certain it is that the French, and many other nations, are far beyond us in the variety of their tones, cadences, and accents. *Nor is it less certain*, that a decided ac-

centuation tends most powerfully to force of expression ; and therefore, as the two will always go together, of conception likewise.

We should do well, then, we Englishmen, to correct, — no, not that, — to break up, rather, and reform, and reanimate our own dull, formal, monotonous, unimpassioned delivery ; throwing in with it a little of the French energy and vivacity. We should think as well as talk the better and the more forcibly for it. There is a quickness, an apprehensiveness, a versatility in that language, that would supply all we want, if we would but practise it. *Experto crede.*

These are great advantages, but it is not for these only, or my share of them, slight as that may be, that I owe thanks to the study. I am a manifold debtor to it.

Old Berthommier, my French master, — I am free to name him, for he is gathered to by-gone generations, — was an easy, kind, affable old man ; a true Frenchman of the *ancien régime* in amenity and complaisance. A child that had never seen him before would have felt the gayer for his presence. From this kindness of heart, he was the only man of education and attainment with whom I had ever conversed familiarly, and as with a friend. There we would sit together, gossiping by the hour on books, authors, great men, politics, and scandal. This was good for me, inasmuch as it tempted me to expand myself. It gave me new notions, and a new ease in expressing them. It imparted to me a certain lightness and gayety, a tone of society more agreeable and more available than much learning.

I have read that in some Eastern country it is customary for families to live in the patriarchal style, three or four generations together ; and that the grandsire takes charge of the little ones, while their parents are out upon *their work*. I guess that children so managed have a

r chance of ready and kindly advancement in intelligence than they have with us. Extremes often meet, but are seldom so well met as in this instance. Very people are generally delighted with the company of men. They are themselves, perhaps, relapsing into idleness ; they have lost their business-like habits and interests ; they are become mere gossippers, and, as are wearisome to people in the vigor of active life ; if children they have the entire advowson ; they can command their attention, they can talk with them at their ease and without effort. Besides, they are on the brink of the grave, and they have a sort of delusive fondness carrying their imagination as far from it as possible. Their thoughts are no willing dwellers among the tombs ; love better the fresh vitality, the death-repelling sphere, of the nursery and cradle. Children, too, boys, are less in awe of them ; they know their immortality, they are more prone to sit on their knees, and listen, and hear histories, and gain instruction from them. Here, then, is mutual gain, and mutual good-

Why do we not make more of such occasions ? About this time, just as I was out of my French apprenticeship, I became acquainted with a young schoolboy, much my superior in most other things, and a little older. By what accident we came together I forget, believe it was a mere accident ; as indeed Providence usually, as if to mortify our self-pride, dispenses her blessings independently of our own exertions, though often concurrently with them.

The boy, as Wordsworth tells us, is father of the man I will undertake to say, that there is not an Englishman living more estimable, more high-principled, more thoroughly amiable than my friend W——. He was indeed of sterling worth ; one of the few boys I have ever known so framed as to strengthen their

morality by their intellect, and their intellect by their morality ; easy, without remissness ; friendly, without importunity ; rational, without a suspicion of coldness ; steady, even, and quiet, yet neither undertoned nor insipid ; the very stuff, in short, that I would choose for a true friend, if I could have him made to my order. He was studious, too, though not precisely after the rule and prescription of our school studies. He had gathered for himself and laid up stores from regions unsoughted by us in general, even in imagination. He was a meta-physician, a theologist, a political economist, in each according to his degree, and that, of course, not a very high one. Still he had general notions, and what he knew he knew well, even to the power of expression and communication. His sight was strong, though in shortsightedness ; and to us, who were in utter darkness, he was indeed a luminary. Our acquaintance blossomed into friendship, and our friendship ripened into familiarity. We took long walks and sweet counsel together ; we were each of us no inconsiderable part of the other's existence. It was so then,—but time has since passed over us, and included us in his changes.

What a thing is human friendship ! Of what high uses and noble worth ! How heartfully enjoyed, and yet, often, how ungratefully neglected ! If a man lets his fortune go to waste, we call him a fool ; if his character, a reprobate ; if he repudiate the care of his wife or children, villain is a word not villainous enough for him in the common estimate ; and yet, with all this, the neglect of a true friend is no term of infamy. Our other senses are perfect, but as for that particular one, we want it altogether. If we had a watch, or gold chain, or purse of money, or other such toy far away from us, we should not be easy until we had recovered it, or, at least, till we were assured of its continuing safety ; but if a friend de-

part from us, at first, indeed, we are sensible of our loss, we lament his absence, we miss him, we regret him ; but our regret is soon softened into acquiescence, our acquiescence is lost in indifference, our indifference in utter neglect and forgetfulness. Such is the usual process, and by it does the world become a blank.

My young friend belonged to a debating society, formed for the discussion of all kinds of subjects, and recruited from the upper classes of the school. He solicited me to become a member of it. I consented, nothing loath,—as knowing that several of its associates, and occasional speakers too, were nowise remarkable for their talent, and imagining, therefore, that I might rise to some eminence among them. As for my powers of oratory, I had never tried them ; but I presumed that speaking was only another kind of talking, and that I should probably come as well off as my neighbours.

In this expectation I attended the first meeting. I heard the opening speech,—if speech it could be called, which speech was none,—being made up, three parts of it, of words born abortively, or stifled in the utterance. Here a hesitation, there a pause, and then a dead silence. Then came the second,—no better ; the third,—a mere struggle of elocution against stranglement. All this was in my favor.

In such exhibitions, the failure of our friends is our own best encouragement, and I was on the point of rising to elevate some goodly fabric of my own on the ruins, or rather the rubbish, of my inedifying rivals. Luckily, it occurred to me, at the very moment, to consider whether I had any thing to say. I paused and pondered a minute or two. I consulted my reason, my imagination, my memory,—no response from any one of them. I could see nothing in my mind distinctly. I might have as well attempted to look through a basin full

of ink. Still I was possessed with some silly notion that I should say something,—that it was my duty to speak. I hardly repressed the impulse, but repress it finally I did. The debate drawled out. I left the room, and, as I went my way homeward, I found, upon reflection, that I had been on the very verge of blundering into a morass, and covering myself with so much mud and mortification as might have clung to me and stopped my mouth ever after. The delivery of a first speech is like that of a first child,—it may be taken, in its good or ill success, as an augury of all subsequent ones.

CHAPTER VII.

“ We strain above our nature for no good,
We must fall back to our old flesh and blood.”—DRYDEN.

I WAS surprised, I confess, at my insufficiency. I had read, indeed, in Cicero, and perhaps elsewhere, that of all acquirements oratory is the hardest and most arduous,—by the by, are not these two one word, disguised into a semblance of variety? I had learned from him, that, whereas in all civilized ages there have been great poets, and great mathematicians, and great philosophers, a great orator has always been a great rarity indeed. Still, from all that I had heard of spouting, and from the associations of the very word itself, I fancied that it was one of the easiest things in the world; little more than mechanical,—a mere pump-working process. But there was evidently need of something, I knew not what, whether sleight, or strength, or science, to make the water flow freely and continuously.

I was surprised, also, to see that the most studious and *regular* boys, the best scholars, and essayists, and versi-

fiers, were by no means the best speakers. In our late rhetorical session they had failed, for the most part, egregiously. On the other hand, certain rough and ready tonguestmen, of small reputed talent, when once they got the ball at their feet, carried it right on, and spoke, if not absolutely well, yet forwardly and fluently, and, on the whole, effectually. These things were worth consideration. I gave my mind to them accordingly.

A little before this I had seen some observations in a review on the notions of a foreign writer concerning the power of the will. This foreigner, it seems, had done something like justice to the wonder-working force of that faculty. What his arguments were, and his method with the subject, I forget utterly. For myself, I am well assured that this energy of will, this wilfulness, so to call it, is the one great talent ; other powers there are, but their office is chiefly to regulate our progression, or at most to accelerate it. The impulse must come from the will in the first instance ; that is the moving power, — the real originating motive. Whatever, then, you do, if it be only to put on your hat, or throw aside your gloves, do it decidedly and earnestly, eschewing all listlessness. The practice will make energy of will, in other words, decision of character, habitual to you. Thus it is, and not by Foster's essay, admirable as it may be, that you must acquire that crowning virtue.

I think I have mentioned elsewhere that I was early used to record any good or well accredited maxims that I might meet, and putting them in practice on occasion, — in fact, of utilizing principles. I utilized this among the rest, — this one, I mean, on the power of the will. From what I had just observed, the art of oratory was something mysterious to me. I was perplexed and discomfited by it. I resolved to satisfy myself, and to work

the problem out. I was up early the next morning, and abroad to make the experiment.

I went to the headland in Poet's-walk, pointing to the fifteen-arch bridge, and there I took my stand, and gave my eloquence to the winds. I could not have bestowed it better, according to its value. No half-trained pointer ever mouthed and mauled and spoiled his subject so villainously. I had chosen a theme, and endeavoured to speak upon it extempore. To this end, — contrary to it I should have said, — I made a point in the first place of setting myself hard, of straining my faculties to their highest pitch, like a sailor at the capstan, forgetting belike that it is by the relaxation and expansion and gentle unsoldure of the mind, and not by its close stricture, that ideas flow inwards. I did all by effort, — an effort painful and laborious beyond description. The result I need hardly say. Oratory, no more than Falstaff's reasons, will not come upon compulsion. My acting was damned horribly, in itself and to itself, though not by the fiat of any audience. I was not of a temper to be baffled thus easily. I returned again and again to the trial, and was foiled as often. At last I threw up the game, and paced moodily homewards, my whole head sick, and my whole heart faint.

I need not pursue the series of my miscarriages. For weeks and months, ay, and I may say for years, afterwards, at intervals, I was laboring, like Sisyphus, against the ascent. But no effort is thrown away, if it be only for a good purpose. My endeavours told in the main, though not perceptibly in any one by-action. The door was opened to me at last, after much urgency and oft repeated knocking, —

“Apparet domus intus et atria longa patescunt,” —
to my view at least, though not often as yet to my actual entrance.

As I hold the practice of oratory not merely profess-edly, but in privacy also, to be a practice of great use, an excellent cordial, and as I have never chanced to see a good useful practical treatise upon it, I will give it here what I can afford it,— a few sentences ; and the reader may perhaps find my ready-made experience of easier and less costly use than ah y that he will be able to work up for himself.

All the higher working faculties — meditation, com-position, oratory, conversation, and even intelligent reading — depend mainly upon attention, active attention. For this there must be first energy of will, — a faculty that we should exercise, as I have just said, in little things, in order that we may strengthen it gradually for great achievements. Suppose this to be acquired, the first point to have been fixed, we have next to produce it into a line, to secure continuity of attention. Indeed, attention without continuity is like a fence with a gap in the middle of it, or a broken line, — no fence, no line, no attention at all, but a mere impression. Now, as attention is as necessary in reading as in oratory, and as oratory is one of the higher faculties and reading one of the lower and easier ones, we may as well take this lower grade of reading first, and treat of attention as belonging to it ; for the perfection of reading tends directly to that of oratory, and so we may work our way up from the former to the latter.

In reading, then, as in talking, continuity of attention is combined with that of enunciation. The latter is the outward sign, the exponent of the former. A man who reads brokenly and hesitatingly, who makes pauses in the midst of sentences, is a bad reader. On the other hand, one who reads with distinction and discrimination, who rounds his periods with their divisions well off, and brings them to a perfect point, we may be sure is master of his

subject, — he is intelligent and intelligible, — he reads well ; and thus in speaking. In fact, whatever a man is about, if he only know his point, and keep it before him, there is no reason why he should not go straight up to it, and so he always will. This, then, should be your first practice in the study of oratory.

In order, then, to speak well, I would recommend the course of discipline already prescribed by me in order to read well. What Machiavelli gives as a rule in politics is equally true in all arts, sciences, and faculties, — to maintain our state we should recur from time to time to its first principles ; and now for the experiment. Suppose a man, by dint of meditation on oratory, and by his consequent conviction of its importance, to have wrought himself up to an energy of will respecting it, — this is the life and soul of his enterprise. To carry this energy into act he should begin with a few sentences from any speech or sermon ; he should get them up thoroughly ; work their spirit into his mind, — and then proceed to evolve that spirit by recitation. Let him assume the person of the original speaker, put himself in his place to all intents and purposes. Let him utter every sentence, and every considerable member of it, if it be a jointed one, distinctly, sustainedly, and unrespiringly, suiting, of course, everywhere his tone and emphasis to the spirit of the composition. Let him do this till the exercise shall have become a habit, and the habit as it were a second nature, till it shall seem unnatural to him to do otherwise, and he will then have laid his cornerstone.

In what I have said on conversation, I insisted much on the necessity of a rapid delivery. This I must here qualify. In conversation, as in oratory, quickness is a very useful quality, and one most frequently resulting from mastery ; but it is not an essential one. An expert

speaker or talker will generally be of quick despatch, for the same reasons metaphorically as a good skater or slider — one who knows his subject, and can keep to it, and command himself upon it — will make quicker way than a mere bungler. This, then, is advantageous ; but the one thing needful is to speak sustainedly and pointedly, whether in slow or rapid utterance.

This should be the first lesson, and an admirable lesson it is, not only for its direct purposes of improving our rhetorical faculty, with all its appurtenant qualities, as quickness, energy, confidence, and the whole host of them, but for the collateral purposes also of exercise, health, and spirits. In this, as in other things, the bodily and mental regimen, the rules for health in each, coincide exactly. Recitation in this respect is like prayer. It should be used, not according to its compulsory use by children, for ostentation's sake, and to gratify their parent's vanity ; not, in short, pharisaically, as an exhibition, but privately, fervently, and regularly, as an earnest exercise. Mark me, I say it should be used regularly, otherwise it will be of little avail. It signifies nothing to take it up for a turn, try it, find it practicable, declare it good, and then lay it down again, and take no further notice of it.

This is the common error of students. They are too eager for new acquisitions, and care not to make good their old ones. They forget that their endeavour should be, not to practise once or twice successfully whatever they may have in aim, but to perfect their practice.

They content themselves with being able to go through their exercises, when they address themselves to them of set purpose ; whereas their object should be to make those exercises familiar, to work them into the habit of the mind ; so that in time of need they may present themselves *of their own accord*, and act in subordination to

the purpose primarily in view. They should go with the will, and indeed anticipate it. An orator is lost, if, when he rises to speak, he must needs be thinking how he shall best practise this and that rule or method ; if he must be fumbling over his technicalities at the time when he should have surrendered himself to the flow of spirit in the consciousness of his self-sufficiency.

“ *Galeatum sero duelli
Pœnitet.* ”

I repeat it, such lessons as these you must not only learn, you should inwardly digest them. I have heard an old East Indian say, that when he was learning archery his master would have him exercise the attitude, and keep drawing the string to his ear, *secundum artem*, for three months together, before he would suffer him to set an arrow ; and those people are anciently wise, — depend upon it, the man’s experience, and that of his progenitors, justified the requisition. But India is a far country. Suppose, then, a physician here to recommend air and exercise to a hypochondriac patient ; the patient goes out the next day, walks to Hampstead and back, congratulates himself on his energy, dines well, feels the better for it, fancies that he has got the secret of his health, and therefore, — mark the inference, — therefore presumes that he may indulge his indolence, and lie on a sofa for the rest of the week. This is madness in reason, but it is only common practice in the world.

The first step, as our French neighbours tell us, is the one that costs us most, and, we may add, is least worth — that is, at present ; its value is not in itself, but in what it leads to. If we stop there, we had better have done nothing, — *aut nunquam tentes aut perfice*. By such trifling we are only put out of humor with our best remedy. We should regard our first attainments as the *thrifty husbandman would regard his first talent*, — as a

fund only of self-reproach and condemnation, if it be wrapped up in a napkin ; but as a thing of great worth, if it be put to its full uses, and multiplied by interest upon interest from a simple unit to a sum of many figures. These notices are long to read, but to reflect upon, if the reader be wise, they will be yet longer ; and this, not because they are the issue of my brain, for so they would be but ill commended, but because they are the genuine fruit of my experience.

But suppose these exercises to have been perfected, and recitation to have done its utmost. What is the next process ? Quintilian, if I mistake not, and Lord Brougham (as in his elaborate discourse upon the subject), and probably many other authorities, would say, “ Practise composition.” *Stylus optimus dicendi magister.* This, by the by, is false upon the face of it. It is certainly not the best. Experience is far better. But to this it may be said, The experience of speaking is speaking itself ; and if so, your objection is naught ; it merely shifts the subject. But this is a quibble upon words, and one not worth the pains of demonstration.

However, as to the principle, Quintilian is far from satisfying me. I doubt much whether composition is conducive to oratorical power, any more than it is conducive to all intellectual powers whatever. It seems to me that the one has little, if any, direct tendency to the other. I would not, therefore, say, compose that you may be an orator ; but, compose that you may be of practised intellect, and then, if you please, you may be an orator. I take the perfection of oratory to be the perfection of human talent, or, as Longinus expresses it, the corollary of long intellectual experience, — expertness should have been the word, only, by our abuse of it, it conveys an image of something merely mechanical. A man would be *unwise*, therefore, to attempt it, unless

after the thorough exercise of his faculties, that of composition among the rest, as subsidiary and preliminary to it ; and, taken in this sense, the injunction to compose earnestly and frequently is undoubtedly a good one. But it is one of many, and, perhaps, not the principal one that should be given. The faculty of oratory includes that of composition, with all its constituents ; but it includes also confidence, energy, self-possession, readiness, use of the world, and a multitude of other attributes. A good speaker cannot fail to be at least a tolerable writer ; waiving, as he must then do, all the personal and physical elements of figure, voice, manner, &c., that might go to constitute in part his oratorical excellence. But the faculty of writing is one that may grow up in the shade ; many a man, strong on paper, might go forth from his closet and prove himself a mere child in the senate, at the bar, or on the hustings.

Intelligence, then, general information, and a sufficient knowledge of the world, are the capital, the necessary stock in trade, of the orator. These I shall presume the aspirant to possess. To attain what may be called the spirit of oratory,—to be master of it, that is, in its highest, and largest, and noblest form, requires much more ; ere this point can be reached the first powers of the intellect must be developed. But to get up the mere art, the technicalities, the mechanical play, of the faculty is an object, though a necessary one, of much lower aim and more vulgar expedition.

Of these adventitious artificial aids, the chief is usage. One should live, move, and have one's being among rhetorical books, and ideas, and people. We must be pervaded and penetrated by the influences from without before we can reasonably attempt to give them forth from within ; just as the prudent householder takes care to *scour his casks* thoroughly well with wine of the true

quality before he commits to them the precious juice, the gladdener of his heart, the life-blood of conviviality. It has been said of some particular art, — painting, I believe, — that it is jealous, and requires the whole man. This, in my opinion, is true, not of that one art only, but of all arts and sciences alike. To divide the attention is to distract the mind's faculties, and to perplex all results. It is true there is a saying abroad, that in learning, as in dining, variety, more than any thing else, tends to stimulate and sharpen the appetite ; this may be, but then, on the other hand, that same variety is apt to interfere sadly with the digestion. Hear Horace on the subject, — a good dietist, and no bad philosopher.

“ *Variæ res
Ut noceant homini noscas memor illius esceæ,
Quæ simplex olim tibi sederit.* ”

Of all the prodigies of learning this is the one secret. Exclusive dealing, hateful as it is in politics, is yet in study a principle of hundred-headed power, — promptly, surely, and lastingly effectual. The great linguist of Bologna, at this moment I forget his name, mastered all his hundred languages ; for he made them, in fact, his own most absolutely, just as the lion did the bulls, by attacking them singly. If it were Greek, for instance, that he wanted, he would shut himself up, resolutely, as the vulgate has it, but, as an etymologist would say, irresolutely, that is, firmly and fixedly, — dwelling among all things Greek, as if the world beside was but a blank ; and brooding over the single subject like a hen upon her eggs, till such time as he might have wrought its elements into organization. Here is the whole mystery. In language, in law-craft, and in oratory, as in religion, one must be transformed from the old spirit, and conformed for the time being to the new one, ere he can speed well. But how can this be ? It is difficult, I admit, nay, im-

possible, for one who is not his own master — who takes his studies and the seasons of them from his pedagogue — to waive, as harlotry, all other intellectual pursuits, and cleave with mastering pertinacity to the single legitimate object of his attachment. This for the schoolboy is impossible. Well, I grant it ; but it is no matter in respect of oratory. This is one of the few studies that may safely be postponed to a late day, and, indeed, should never be attempted till the fulness of time be come, till the accomplishment of all other faculties. Should you begin it after your first year's probation at the university you will begin full early.

But whenever you would enter seriously upon this study, and whether upon this one solely, and for the time exclusively, or jointly with others, you must look well to the mechanical details, or, as we call it in law, the practice ; usage I believe I called it a few pages back. To this end you should be conversant with speakers. You should familiarize yourself with the air of the forum, whether popular or legal. You should learn to feel at home there, — to recognize in it a congenial element. In short, you should endeavour by all means to grow as it were into a rhetorical disposition ; to consider public speaking as a thing proper to yourself, as much a matter of course as your ordinary breakfast or dinner ; and so to strip it of the solemnity and awfulness wherewith the imagination of unpractised people has invested it.

For the furtherance of this purpose, you will do well to choose some speaker for your model, and conform yourself to him, manner and spirit, as near as may be. This has often been recommended as a rule in composition, but it is much more easily applied in oratory ; as this latter, in its mechanical practice, lies much more in outward show than the former, and is, therefore, more capable of *imitation*. I well remember my own method as to this

point. There was but one tolerable speaker among us, — tolerable, I mean, as a boy, from his promise rather than from his performance. The rest were speechless souls, — infants in oratory, — chickens not yet out of their egg-shell, and laboring with all their little mights, awkwardly and unsuccessfully, to escape from it ; or, at best, trailing themselves about with portions of it hanging to them, impeding the use of their limbs, and encumbering all their motions. Luckily, with one exception, they were all equally bad, so that their infirmities served at least one good purpose, that of keeping them mutually in countenance.

I have before more than once taken credit for the faculty of observation, and that other faculty, more valuable still, of turning what I might observe to its proper practical use ; occasionally, that is, but of course not invariably, nor even generally. These are master faculties ; without them the best of us would be no better than machines, and with them we are far on the way to rational excellence and happiness. Here in my new rhetorical study they had a wide scope. I singled out young * * * from the *mutum et turpe pecus*, and fixed the eye of my observation upon him. I watched, I studied, I communed as it were with his tone of voice, his gestures, his course of delivery, his play of countenance, in short, with all the outward signs and features of his oratory, from the first moment that he rose. I went along with him, I accompanied his voice by my inward recitation of every sentence as he uttered it, working myself as near as might be to his pitch, and tempering myself to his spirit by the force of imitation. I assumed, by a bold fiction of my fancy, that I was the real speaker, and that he was a mere vocal organ, a sort of mouthpiece, expounding my words, and giving utterance to my spirit. The *method was effectual for its end*. When once I was

in train, when the fervor of rhetoric had begun to work upon me, my ideas presented and marshalled themselves with a rapidity and orderliness that surprised me. I was indeed inwardly and in my own mind an orator ; I wanted nothing but words to realize my fiction.

I owed much to this course of discipline. It helped me on surpassingly. Animal magic, or the power of sympathy, or, yet again, the process of feeling at second-hand, is a thing of strange effect upon the imagination ; but nowhere is it so forceful as in oratory. I was waxing stronger ; I was growing in confidence and experience from one session to another. I felt conscious that I could speak at will ; and such consciousness, if it be only cool and deliberate, is almost sure to verify itself. Strange, however, as it may seem, I never once put the faculty upon trial during the time that I remained at school, but stayed, like the indecisive sportsman, adjusting my aim, and following my winged game with the muzzle of my gun, till it had got out of my reach before I would draw the trigger. Still the faculty itself was there, albeit without a token of its existence. I believe that I was a potential orator, though assuredly I was no actual one.

So much for the moral excellences of the speaker. For their attainment, and for the subjugation of their opposite infirmities, I believe there is no better method than the one just transcribed from the records of my own experience. As for physical infirmities, those for instance of voice, and sundry others, “therein the patient must minister to himself,” according to his wants and occasions. As for me, it could never have been said that all the elements were so met in me as to make an orator. The big, manly voice was none of my attributes. I had been possessed, time out of mind, with the still, small, speaking spirit, the speech, as Isaiah says, whispering out of the dust, the next sister of silence. This

was a want that must be supplied, or all other good qualities would have been lost in its “dim vacuity.” I had read, as almost all schoolboys have, how Demosthenes, by force of habitual perseverance, overruled his nature, and overcame the same sort of impediment to his rhetorical eminence. Fain would I have followed such a light to the extremity of its guidance. But Eton, as Providence would have it, is an inland place. The ocean is far away,—no Rhegium is there, no noise of breakers to bawl down, no surgy agitation to overlook, and liken it to the storms of popular contention. But what I could I did ; not even there was I wanting to myself ; what opportunity gave me, that I put out to profit.

We have all heard of field-preaching. Many mislike it, and none more than those most reverend Fathers in God (is this sanctity or only blasphemy in its guise ?) our apostolical Lord Bishops ; ay, the whole bench of them,—split and distributed as it is into some twenty and odd King Logs, to be set up in state amid the wide waste of ecclesiastical stagnation, where the sun of patronage, for the comfort of all Christian people, is for ever generating a goodly succession of reptiles out of the slime of corruption. And if such people mislike any thing so evangelical as field-preaching, it is not without good cause shown. For, where religion is a solemn farce, the best hypocrite, now in English, as long since in Greek, is the best actor. With those whose faith is but profession, zeal and sincerity are but so many cant words for fanaticism ; the nursling, Grace, is overlaid by the pretended nurse, Formality. Verily they are what their name denotes, overseers indeed, in their oversight of humility, self-denial, and all other the gospel virtues,—virtues that love the ground, and live not in pride of place. Field-preaching, then, according to them, is *naught, and so we are bound to hold it, as their authority,*

in point of law, overrules that of our Saviour ; but field-speaking is another thing, and that is what I am about to commend from my own experience of its uses.*

I was wont, as I have said elsewhere, at a time when my imbecility of voice was yet more pitiable and painful, to betake myself somewhere in the open fields, the champaign country, and there to bawl in prose or poetry at the top of my lungs, in order to strengthen them for conversation. I never forgot the good effect of this practice, and I had now to try it again for another purpose. This I did with so much the more earnestness and good-will, as I considered that to be an orator was a much finer and nobler thing than only to be a talker. So then it was to be. The only question was whether I should repair, what sylvan, sequestered echoes I should wake by my soliloquies. My choice was soon fixed. There was a summer-house by the river's side, far down towards Datchet, built on an artificial eminence, and guarded by a semicircular trench on its land side. By what pretty name it might be endeared to its owner I cannot say, but by us schoolboys it was honored with the proud appellation of Badajoz,—from some such similarity I suppose between the two places as the quick apprehension of Fluellen discovered between Macedon and Monmouth. Thither was my resort generally at the fall of evening, just at that sweet time when the sun, like a sovereign on the point of abdication, shows more lovely, more winningly gentle and beneficent in the instance of his retirement than in the full blaze of his zenith. I bless God to this hour that I was in the habit of looking on such a scene ; it is yet an abiding glory to me ; it is laid up in my memory, and there mellowed

* The Greek word “ apostolical ” is the same as the French “ démissionnaire.” The bench has never been apostolical in any other sense, but I hope that it will soon become so in this.

and softened into more than its original sweetness. I can never think of it but I am again a boy as fresh as I then was in sentiment and spirit, and all associated influences. That summer-house was locked against the stranger, — stranger indeed I was not, none other was so familiar there, — nevertheless it was closed against me also ; but there were some lines copied on the door, some touching verses of Byron. I have read them often since, and never without feeling anew in my heart and all over me the tender, delicious sentiment of those summer evenings. I repeat it, God be praised for them.

I remember one evening, when I was in the very rapture of oratory, in the full flow and fervor of Demosthenes' first philippic, I felt a hand upon my shoulder. Of all the impositions I ever suffered, this was the most hateful one. Imagine my agony ; had it been the claw of the devil himself, or even, to make a bad Greek pun, the very "omotes" of the bailiff, I could not have been more entirely discomfited. The mere sight of a footprint was enough to drive Robinson Crusoe to the very end of his wits ; but what was this to the actual bodily, sensible impression of a hand upon my person, and I the while standing there in a position of the most poignant ridicule ?

I turned upon the pressure of that hand, slight as it was, in the same hurried agony as a worm upon the foot that tramples it. It was the face of a familiar friend that I confronted, — a face that I had hardly ever before seen without pleasure since our acquaintance first began ; but, O, at that moment how heartily did I wish that he had been a stranger, one whom I might never have met again, to have the recollection of my absurdity rankled up by his presence ! This is the strangeness of our constitution — our natural constitution, I mean — *until we have reformed ourselves to the frame*

of Christianity, or of philosophical reason. Till such time it is more tolerable for us, in the waywardness of our humor, to be detected in an immorality or a meanness, than in any act, however just and reasonable in itself, that may be obnoxious to the ridicule of fashion. Such was my own feeling at that moment, ay, and I regret to say it, long afterwards. Two years from this date, when my poor young friend was cut off in the flower of manhood, I remember well, that, amidst all my pain for his departure, I had a gleam of satisfaction that the witness of my exhibition was gone, and its memorial perished with him. It is a thing scarcely credible to those who know not nor have studied the wickedness of the human heart ; but it is true, nevertheless. Now, however, I thank God, my disposition is far other than this. What would have been my shame in times past is now my joy and triumph,—the recollection I mean of all such by-gone follies and weaknesses, involving, as it does, the consciousness that I am at length grown above them, and that this consummation has been brought about under Providence by the force of my own reflections, and of my practical philosophy.

It was this accident, more than any thing else, that imposed silence upon me through our debates ever after. I felt like a juggler, or a showman, at the exposure of their underhand play, their wire and puppet movements. I was ashamed that the mechanism of my oratory, its “base second means,” should have been so betrayed. It was said of Demosthenes, that his speeches stunk of the lamp, and I had certain misgivings lest malice might say of mine that they sounded of my raving fits, my storming of Badajoz ; accordingly I held my peace, and I have no reason to regret it. *Præpropera praxis* is said by Lord Coke to be a crying evil in law, — by the by, there is no fear of its being an epidemic one ; and the

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"Dii bene fecerunt inopis me quodque pusilli
Formarunt animi raro et per pauca loquentis."

Besides the feebleness of my voice, I had another intimacy then upon me ; insignificant it may seem to the reader, but to the sufferer of grievous and perpetual penance. My family at that time had been long abroad, and, as a matter of necessity, I was consigned during my absence from school in the vacations to the care, or, as it proved sometimes, the negligence, of comparative strangers. At all events it is difficult to find any substitute for the fond, far-seeing anxiety of a mother, — and for me, such as I wanted it, never was any such provided. No sooner was my school restraint over, but I was suffered to run wild, — to pickle myself in mud and dirt, — to itch cold, and entertain it familiarly as a friend till it might choose to depart at its good pleasure, — to cram myself with all kinds of glut, wholesome and unwholesome, in season and out of season, till my stomach was foully stuffed as one of the drains of Covent Garden, — and Nature, after all this violence and much more had been done to her, was left to right herself or not, as the chance might happen. The consequence was, that I became in due time a sad figure, full of ill humors and teasing eruptions, not in such a degree as to give those round me any alarm about my health, but yet amply enough to make me very uneasy and uncomfortable. In

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fact, this one fountain of bitterness poisoned the whole current of my young life for years together ; although dwelling in a fertile climate, yet, as Shakspeare says of Othello, I was plagued with flies, and plagued out of all patience. My consciousness of a boil or blotch, or unseemly eruption on my face, was like an everlasting blister to me. In society, in common talk, I was for ever thinking of myself and the fancied horrors of my appearance, when I should have been full only of my subject. I could look no one in the face ; and not to be able to do that, as I have often seen, is to be under the hopeless condemnation of nervousness, indecision, feeble-mindedness, and absurdity in all social intercourse. All this began with me in my childhood ; but, as I advanced in years, it continued still to grow upon me, and left its traces in my disposition long after its physical causes had given way to regular diet and regimen. The disease is dead and gone, but to this day its ghostly shadow will occasionally come over me.

These are things that deserve much more of a parent's consideration than they generally receive. In the article of dress especially, wound but a boy's pride, and you will be but too likely to deprave his whole moral being. Of this, the common-sense of mankind is conscious ; shabbiness has a second moral meaning, transferred from its primitive one ; and, as regards the schoolboy, the metaphor is just, signifying, as it does, the parallelism of real facts. The man of the world, indeed, has too much experience to be taken by a feather. He knows that many people dress but shabbily, and are yet worthy, prudent, clever, and estimable men. He knows the value of other things,—for instance of moral and social qualities,—and rates superficial accomplishments immeasurably beneath them ; and therefore, no doubt, at their proper relative value. But the schoolboy has no such knowledge. He cannot properly estimate moral ad-

tages, but he can see at once the elegance of a good coat, and the shabbiness of a bad one ; and, of course, he judges from what he sees, and not from what he is unable to see. It follows, that many a squire's or parson's son, who has been suffered to run about in the country, gypsy-fashion, and spoil so many clothes that his father concludes at last that any thing is good enough for him, is put in a very painful predicament when he is sent to a great school with his old habits upon him. He is treated like a little blackguard ; and, as we are all the creatures of circumstances, he is therefore very likely to become one. He is debased inwardly, he can never hold up his head among his schoolfellows, he loses his self-esteem, that first bulwark of morality, and degenerates into a sneaking, skulking, slinking little wretch. It is a grand point to get a boy to think well of himself, — not vainly, but well, — and so there is a fair hope that he may verify his opinion.

But it is time that I should have said my say upon this subject. Nor is it from any feeling of self-regard that I have been so full of particulars upon it. Vanity is none of my weaknesses, though, peradventure, as Iago says, I stand accountant for many others as blameworthy. Indeed, there are few that can know me in my disguise, and fewer still will feel any interest about me. But I was anxious to show what I have exemplified elsewhere, and can never prove too often, that, in things moral and intellectual, — that is, in the constituents of happiness, — perseverance can and will do any thing, in spite of all imaginable disadvantages. “Where there is a will there is a way” is an adage often repeated to children, but too seldom considered or practised by their elders.

Let any man who may happen to read what I am now writing say within himself, upon a strong and determined impulse, “I will be a speaker ; not that I may spout in

public, and split the ears of the groundlings, but that I may get a better and more ennobling gift, — that I may acquire a flow of language, a quickness of ideas, a pointedness of purpose, and a sustained tone in conversation, together with the energy of thought, word, and deed necessarily resulting from these qualities.” Let him but so say, and so do, and, though he begin from ever so low a degree, there is no power on earth that can prevent his progress. The lower his starting-point the better. He should set out again from the very elements. In arts and sciences, as in religion, we should receive our principles as little children, or we shall receive them to small purpose. Whereas the cry of most dullards, the apology of their idleness, is this : — “ I am too low in the scale ; I have no resources ; I can never hope to rise, it is useless to attempt it.” And yet the same people, if by any chance they should be thrown down into a gutter, would hardly acquiesce and be content to lie there. The very consciousness of their prostration would be the spur that would stimulate them to raise themselves by all possible efforts. And why not also in the case of mental prostration ? Would a prisoner cling to his captivity, and hug his fetters, because his dungeon was a low, and dark, and noisome one ? No ; he would pant for “ upper air ” all the more aspiringly. Besides, in such cases, the greater the contrast between our past and present condition, the more our satisfaction at the change.

“ The fewer means, the greater share of glory.”

I have been somewhat long upon the sayings and doings of our debating society ; but, in compliment to the reader’s patience, I will venture yet a few remarks on the uses and abuses of such societies in general. I have seen and heard a good deal of them, and my experience perhaps may be worth its record. As schools of oratory,—

an, of course, among boys and minors,—I cannot great-commend them. The mind generally appears there in squerade, and in such garb as reminds one more than γ thing else of a Jew's court-dress and tinsel shop. It absurd to expect that a boy should be able to speak ill from his own resources ; his best resource, in fact, that of borrowing from others ; of putting together a ance-medley of purple patches, and hemming them out with his own sackcloth border ; here is the sin of igiarism ; and the still more heinous one of dissimula-
n, in studying, and acting, and ranting, in order to dis-
ise it. Besides, as it is much easier to steal than to bor and create, the danger is, if we once begin to prac-
e this “ fatal facility,” that we shall learn to waive our
n faculties, get into a habit of relying upon any thing
it ourselves, and so become mere commonplace-mon-
rs. Where a boy’s faculties are very forward already,
is practice may bring them out still further ; but, in
eneral, the strain is too great for the system that is to
pport it ; the tax eats into the capital, — it imposes, or,
Shakspeare’s words,

“ Lays on such burdens, as to bear them
The back is sacrifice to the load.”

ne might as well put an ass’s foal into a costermor-
r’s cart, with the idea of strengthening it by the exer-
se. Oratory is the weapon of an athlete ; it can never
be wielded to any purpose by a mere stripling. As a
rong-headed friend of mine once observed to me, “ Or-
atory with us is swathed and swaddled, till it is at last
rangled.”

The habit, then, for its primary and express purpose,
rather mischievous than useful. But, as no effort, if
ell intended, is ever entirely thrown away, so this boy-
h discipline of rhetoric is not without its redeeming vir-
ies. It induces a boy to look about him ; to mark,

learn, and observe ; to enter upon considerations that he would never have dreamt of otherwise ; to read, not for reading's sake, nor for the sake of names and dates, but for opinions, reasons, and principles. It tends to give him the *decanatum illud* of the Germans (is not this the origin of cant ?), many-sidedness. Above all, it has often the blessed effect of raising mere fellowship into friendship, — the fellowship of idleness, that cannot endure itself alone, into the friendship of mental communion. Still, all this good might be as well attained by conversation clubs as by debating societies ; and free, too, from the mischief belonging particularly to the latter, with much more of friendliness and expansive spirit, and much less of the horrible vice affectation. Let those whom it concerns look to it.

Among our subjects of debate, those connected with Whig and Tory politics were not, as it may well be guessed, the least frequent. The self-styled liberal party was predominant with us ; the bias of early inclination being generally to that side. At the present day, it is true, this is very far from being the case ; anomalies are rife, and here is one of them, and not the least remarkable ; but that most young politicians in ordinary times are tinged with republicanism is a fact of long experience. It is generally attributed to the ardor, and expansiveness, and confident zeal of young spirits. There is something in this, but not I think enough for the entire solution. The fact is, that a classical education (and the education of our upper ranks is chiefly classical) tends to this result directly and necessarily.* It is difficult, in youth especially, to dwell long among republican scenes, and images, and glories, and not feel that the heart is at home there, that its political inclinations can tend nowhere else ;

* I find that Hobbes in his *Leviathan* denounces all classical studies for this very reason.

still more difficult is it to study the Greek and Roman histories, and indeed those of all republics in all ages and countries, and refuse our admiration to that form of government which alone, of all tried hitherto, seems to possess the power arrogated to himself by Themistocles,—that of making a great state out of a small one, and enabling an insignificant town with a barren territory, not merely to resist, but to overpower, a succession of mighty armies and large empires. This I presume from the very nature of things, and from the simple force of evidence, must be the general effect of successful classical studies ; but it is a property, for the most part, of general effects to be slow in their operation ; doubtless they would have wrought upon me in time, had not an individual power preoccupied me, and precluded them from their scope. Just as Bassanio says, that his particular grief is of so violent and floodgate nature, as utterly to overwhelm and bear down all general considerations.

I was very early a great reader of Plutarch, as every book-loving boy must needs be, if he have access to him. That book is said to have made more heroes in the field, and more enthusiasts in republican politics, than any thing else extant ; if so, it is not from any extraordinary power of its own, but from the nature of the materials subjected to it,—just as a spark of fire may happen to blow up a citadel. I will venture to say, that in all his biography there is not a single life which any respectable modern compiler would care to claim as his composition. However, though there is as little of philosophy as Cobbett himself could have desired, there is good plenty of wars, treasons, and conspiracies, to serve as fuel for the fire of a youthful imagination.

As it happened, I was at no loss to indulge my heroic appetite. Years before this, while I was yet a fag, a few odd volumes of Plutarch were the tenants of one of

my master's book-shelves, the sole constituents of his extrascholastic library. He was a busy idler, a boy of many time-killing resources ; none of your home-sitters, or doers of gratuitous book-work ; and, as he was never to be found at home, unless from stress of weather, his room was of course always "*vacua*," in the Horatian sense,—that is, ready to receive me. I knew pretty well the time of his incomings and outgoings, and, the moment that I was assured of his absence, I used to steal up, shut the door gently, and proceed to live over again the lives of some one of the Greek or Roman worthies, as set forth in Plutarch.

Once, as I was thus engaged, the clock struck. It was, or should have been, the signal for my departure ; it was the time that my monster master might be expected home again to his den ; but I was just then at a point of agonizing interest,—in the life of Crassus,—in the midst of the perplexities and disasters that were to be closed by his death a few pages after. I could not abandon the book, still less could I read it where I was ; my only middle course was to elope with it ; and that I did in the spirit of sincere and disinterested affection. It was not likely that my master should take any note of the abduction,—neither did he,—but, as it chanced, that very same evening he came up to my room, in order to put me on some job, or send me on an errand. His footstep fell idly on my ears. All my other senses were absorbed in my reading faculty. I was unconscious of his approach, until he burst the door open, and stood in all his hatefulness before me. There I sat with his book, in flagrant delinquency. The fact spoke for itself, and cried for instant punishment ; and his tender mercies, as far as I was concerned, were never proof against such an appeal. Kick succeeded kick, and cuff was redoubled upon cuff; while the vocal energy of his wrath vented itself in the

gracious compliments of thief, scoundrel, rascal, and cursed little liar. I protested my innocence of any felonious intent loudly and long. I averred, as the fact was, that I was only a borrower. But I might as well have suffered obstinately in silence. My deprecation of punishment served only to lengthen its infliction ; and to this day, in all probability, my young tyrant is persuaded that I was a sheer thief, and deserved all that I endured.

This illicit love of heroism, such as it is portrayed in Plutarch, or, to speak exactly, my illicit gratification of that love, and the consequent punishment, made three several impressions upon me. First, there was the pain of my thrashing ; this was no trifle, while it lasted, but it did not last long, and was soon forgotten. Then came the disgrace of my detection ; the consciousness of my ill fame with my master, and probably, also, with his friends ; his presumption of my thievishness, and my own anguish thereupon ; although in my heart I well knew that I was as innocent of any such thing as a new-born cherub, never dreaming of any thing else but only to return the book on the first occasion. This was a sad thing for me, a black cloud upon my spirits ; yet a cloud is an adventitious thing, and generally one of speedy riddance,—but this was a gloominess arising out of my own meditations, like a mist from a mountain-circled lake, and, ever as it arose, settling upon them again in the obstinacy of self-originated melancholy. Here was an affliction of longer life ; however, I got the better of it in time ; it sunk gradually from the surface, and was lost in the general mass of my feelings.

The third impression, that of a decided political character, was the strongest, and deepest, and most lasting one ; one indeed that is likely to gain upon me with years, inasmuch as it is now converted from an impression into a habit ; and therefore, if my theory be true, instead of

being liable to be weakened in its force by renewal, as all mere impressions are, it is strengthened by every repetition. My political faith, be it heresy or not, is one that no fire will ever burn out of me. There I have set my stake, and by it I am content to abide and suffer. And gladly would I suffer, ay, even to the extremity of martyrdom, if suffering were made the condition of success.

For years past, this project of social amelioration through political means has been a favorite with me. At one time it was the primary channel of my thoughts, the course where they would continually be running, whenever they were free from constraint, and left wholly to themselves. Even now it is second in my affection and interest to the still higher principle that I have recently taken for my guide, — for my guide, my trust, and my comfort, — the sentiment, I mean, of the present power of the Almighty, and thankful acquiescence in his will. The love of man, indeed, is sure to expand itself into that of God. The one is a mere development of the other.

There was another accident that inflamed my political zeal in those days to a boiling pitch. I happened to have a relative, how near or how distant it matters little, who had been bold enough to declare his opinions freely and uncompromisingly, at a time when opposition to Toryism was little less execrated than atheism would be at this day. Some two or three of my schoolfellows, just initiated into politics, and inflamed with all the ardor of novices, heard, or read, something of the politics of this man, and found out my relation to him. Instantly I was marked for their persecution. Day after day, and often half-a-dozen times in a day, I was taunted with the fact, and teased by their malignity in all the impish forms that *it could assume*. I was then about fourteen, — they

were some years my seniors. I was forced to endure it on, for sufferance was the badge of all our tribe ; and endure it I did, both on and out too ; not in patience, — I should have hated myself for the virtue, — but in silence and secrecy, like a snake concocting its venom. I felt the more incensed, because I venerated deeply the man through whose side I was thus pierced, and in this I did him no more than justice, — a finer, or purer, or nobler-spirited being never breathed. I was too sensitive of ridicule, and too fearful of an *éclat* on a point so delicate, to throw my sever off, as I might have done, in a burst of rage or vindictiveness ; I let it smoulder on and consume me secretly. The spirit thus compressed within me — the spirit of hatred against political persecutors — imbued me thoroughly, and penetrated so much the more because it was repelled from the surface. Such was the consequent exasperation of my prejudices, that I verily believe I should have clung to them, then, and years afterwards, though an angel from heaven had come to me with a special revelation of their falsehood. Such is our nature. The stern mantle of republicanism may be surrendered to the kindness of the sovereign sun, the influence of conciliation ; but let the storm assail it, and it is sure to be folded the more closely and grasped the more obstinately by the wearer.

At this moment I have one of my persecutors, and he the chief of them all, in my mind's eye. I hated him at that time worse than I ever yet hated man or devil, and, even now that I make it my religion to hate nothing, I can never think of him without feeling a sensation of inward shrinkingness, a thorough abhorrence. I have seen him since we left school ; it was but once, and I am glad that it was no oftener, or mischief might have come of it. We met at a *table d'hôte*, in the Netherlands. I was the first to see him enter the room. I knew him instantly,

but I felt as if my heart had become stone, and for a minute or two could say nothing. Then came the hot fit. I was affected, just as a dog is said to be in the presence of a wolf, with deadly antipathy and a shuddering, aguish sort of rage. I controlled myself, however, so far as to walk quietly up to him, and, reminding him of what had passed between us, requested him to leave the room. He was startled, as well he might be ; looked like a fool, stammered a few words, and at last refused bluntly. I did not venture to lay my hands upon him. I lacked either courage for the purpose, or confidence in my strength. Instead of that, I confronted him as close as I could stare, and poured out upon him a flood of abuse, a determined devilry of spirit, such as I had never before even imagined. The energy of desperation generally carries its point against any ordinary temper ; what were my friend's feelings at the moment I cannot say. Possibly he might fancy that there were weapons sharper than even the sharpest words, and that there was no security against the use of them by a fanatic. However that may be, he was completely overcrowded, fairly bullied out of the field. He turned suddenly away, snatched up his hat, hurried out of the room, and I saw no more of him. This was the only dangerous quarrel of my whole life ; I exhausted my bile upon it. Since then I have been meek and patient, even beyond the ordinary sufferance of manhood, or, as many would say, below it.

This early taste for Plutarch I continued through my whole boyhood. There is no interest for a reader like that of biography ; and, as the more delicate light and shades, the nicer points of character, the finer touches that give the individual air, are all lost upon the boy, the biography that is fullest of horrors, and therefore the most disgusting to the man, is to him the most captivating. My prejudice was of course my guide in the selec-

tion of my heroes. Agis and Cleomenes, Timoleon, Pelopidas, and Cato, but, above all, the Gracchi, were my sainted worthies. The lives of the two last stand out from the dull foil of all around them with something of a peculiar brightness. Plutarch was a republican at heart ; and he has set forth those two genuine noblemen, those martyred patriots, with a spirit above the common level of his nature. One evening of our debates, we had to discuss the question (a trite one, I have no doubt, but to me as splendid as if it had been fire-new), Are the Gracchi entitled to our commendation ? The authorities for this period of Roman history are strangely scanty. We could draw only on Plutarch, and on him for only an insignificant amount of information. I sat down one day to study him, and get the subject up, as I was required by our rules to speak upon it. At that time I was under the full sway of my political enthusiasm. I read with intense interest the early history of the two brothers, their noble parentage, the yet nobler promise of their youth, their self-devotion to the popular cause, and the first steps of their career. I was tossed about with them through all their after agitations ; but when their blood-red sun set finally, betokening in its lurid glare the storms that soon after shattered the republic, I felt as if the whole spectacle were before me, and they had suffered under my eyes and for my interest. The mockery that followed their death, the erection by the nobles of a temple to Concord after their unprovoked slaughter of two thousand citizens, disgusted me yet more than the capital tragedy itself. I dashed the book down, and paced about the room stamping and gesticulating in a paroxysm of indignation. My feelings were too big, they crowded upon me too tumultuously, for orderly utterance. When it was my time to speak, I felt that I was above myself ; and in that persuasion said merely

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that I had considered the question, and should vote the affirmative of it.

I have often thought that this decided political tenor has been of signal advantage to me. It has served me as a perpetual issue, — a sure preventive of the stagnation and corruption of evil humors ; or, to illustrate it by a nicer image, it has made my thoughts run in a channel, instead of lying out widely and wastefully in expansive idleness. It gave me what I wanted much, — energy of will, and thence fixedness of purpose. It may serve for what the old Schoolmen in their barbarous Latin called *regula regulans*, a standard line of life continually recalling us by its straight and definite projection from our scopeless and listless wanderings, giving the mind play, and preventing it from falling back and oppressing itself with its own weight. Energy is a general quality, — it can no more exist in one single kind than life can exist only in a single limb ; therefore, if we *can* become energetic for one purpose, and that a habitual one, we *shall* become so gradually for all others : —

“ Yes, there is a necessity in Fate
Why still the brave, bold man is fortunate ;
He keeps his object ever full in sight,
And that assurance holds him firm and right,” —

enables him by fixing his eye intently on an opposite object “ to pass the current roaring loud on the unsteady footing of a spear.” I have heard it said by a man of much experience in life, and of much observation to utilize it, that no one without an adstricting business or profession should be without a strong regular study. For myself, I would enlarge the scope of this rule, altering a little the terms of it ; and thus it should stand : No man should be without a ruling purpose of life with reference to his fellow-creatures ; this being his secondary practical rule, and always subordinate to the primary and devo-

onal one of fulfilling in all things, according to his power, the will of the Almighty. O, that men would consider this ! O, that they would take counsel, and do it ! If every man, as the Apostle says, according to his gifts and spirit, were to take this ministry upon him,—to labor, each in his particular calling, some for the advancement of morality, others for that of religion, education, the promotion of temperance, industry, comfort, contentment, and all kinds of righteousness ; if this were done, not generally, and therefore vaguely, idly, and unsatisfactorily, but specially, pointedly, and by a minute division of the work, surely that work would prosper,—surely we should be happy, each in his occupation ; humanity would rise up and rejoice, and earth would reflect on its face the very image of heaven. But who is the faithful servant that will so put out his talent to its increase ? I ask, and none answers. In these latter days the love not only of many, but wellnigh of all, is waxed cold. Christianity has been crucified, its heart and bowels are torn out and flung away ; nothing is left of it but a lifeless, spiritless, clay-cold carcass.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ A soul without reflection, like a pile
Without inhabitant, to ruin falls.” — YOUNG.

THIS was another epoch of my life, — a resting-place, to translate the word epoch from learned into plain language ; and so, that I may do justice to etymology, I will stop a brief while and look around me, carrying myself back in imagination, as well as I may, to the scenes and sentiments of that period. I had passed from

the childhood of my intellect to its boyhood. Instead of taking every thing upon trust, and reproducing it upon order in the same form that it was given me, I had got by this time into the habit of looking out for myself, and combining and recombining as I pleased my store of imagery. I was becoming every day less mechanical and more rational. I was impatient of mere school drudgery. I regarded all its methods and elements as nothing more than the scaffolding whereby my intellectual structure had been raised ; and now that its end, as I fancied, somewhat foolishly, was achieved, I was uneasy till it should be cleared away from before me, and the glories of existence revealed fully to my sight. Again I fell in love with solitude. I became contemplative and musing,—an airy castle-builder,—a framer of figures out of the rich texture of the clouds. I rested from my labors ; it was enough for me that my heart was filled with the mere prospect of the works of the Almighty. My thoughts, or, as I should rather call them, my imaginations, floated onward like a mist ; receiving and reflecting many bright and lovely colors, but incapable of any regular character or definite conformation. Their path was as inexplicable as that of the arrow through the air to the sage in Scripture ; but my general tone of sentiment I well remember ; it was much like what my sensations have often been in a lovely spring morning, when the heart is glad within the bosom, when we feel, as it were, Platonized in our existence, penetrated with the soul of Nature, and every nerve and fibre in full union with her tone.

“ Where only to feel that we breathe, that we live,
Is worth the best joy that life elsewhere can give.”

There must be something against nature in solitude, something foreign to the moral sense. The proof is, *that, however delicious it may be to us, we do not like*

seen or known as votaries of it. This was my feeling. The gairish eye of observation was too intently upon me in my wanderings ; and so, in order to do it, and at the same time to luxuriate in my darning of musingness, I betook myself to the game of it ; if indeed it can be called a game, when in fact o game at all to eighteen out of the two-and-twenty ed in it ; as for the rest, they do not play in good it, they merely play at playing. But be that as it as my humor then was, I was mightily beholden a better pretext for idleness was never framed. I used to stand hour by hour, basking, the out-boy of me in the sun, and my inward heart and n the deliciousness of my day-dreams, the warm ce of my imagination. Six hours and upwards in ay, that is, the whole available time of it, I have exhausted in this fashion ; for the ceremony and nstance of a double-wicket game can be despatched shorter period. This I must needs say requires re-

No one thinks better of recreation than I do ; no ibhors more heartily any overstrain of labor ; but no rest except as a relaxation from work ; and for to play all day long, "from morn to noon, from to dewy eve," and plead that he is recreating him-s as absurd as it would be in a dram-drinker to dose if every quarter of an hour, and pretend that he is aking a cordial. Apropos of this, — it was said of at monarch of old, that he was never drunk more once in his whole life. This it seems was true ; ne panegyric implied in the truth was something ed, when it appeared that his virtue was one of sity ; that he could not possibly in fact have been more than once, inasmuch as his single fit lasted his whole life through ; and so of our Eton crick-

They play but once in a day ; ergo, they are.

studious to a marvel, or, as they ask in Chancery, How otherwise? Not altogether so. Their game is the natal genius of their day, the *comes qui temperat*, the soul of the body. They are bound up in the same band; they rise, grow up, and vanish together.

This was the complexion of my life for some three or four weeks' space. But the pleasure of indolence, like all other illicit pleasures, is but of fleeting quality. The still water may reflect heaven upon its face for a time, but it is sure at last to be incrusted with all kinds of foulness and fœulence. I began to find that irksomeness weighed heavily upon me.

“In otio nescit quid velit;
Incertè errat animus; præter propter vitam vivitur.”

I felt myself continually prompted to my relief by the instinct of activity. I wanted to bestow myself somewhere; the only difficulty was to determine the object. But my suspense was not long. Just about that time one of the many Eton periodicals, extant for a brief moment and then extinct for ever, happened to spring up; a wretched paper-boat, swamped in the current of Time almost as soon as it was committed to its surface. However, our vanity would take no warning from foreign experience,—it would never rest till it had wrecked itself. These little things were great to such very little intellects as our own. At the first mention of the project, our public interest was kindled and spread like wildfire; not a stripling, in short, who had any reputation for cleverness, or fancied that he deserved it, but was ambitious to give his tribute. Of the many I was one, by force of restlessness, impatience, and wounded vanity. As for classical scholarship, I was aware that I had long been falling back from the front ranks, and was then, as they say at Newmarket, nowhere in the race. I had tried myself on another tack. I had lost

my reckoning in algebra ; my hope of distinction there had been racked to death ; but here was a fresh project, one that promised well, and I believed its promises in the fulness of young faith. I resolved to appear in the lists, and put my pen, not in rest, but in activity, for the honor of Eton.

One evening as I lay in bed, after I had wearied myself during the day by the distraction of different subjects for my choice, I determined by a sudden thought to make an end of my perplexity, and decide within ten minutes. This was wisely done. In such cases we can hardly choose ill, if we do but fix our choice promptly and definitely. A few days before, something on the character of Cæsar had appeared in our periodical. This, in all probability, gave a bias to my thoughts, and pointed to that particular period of history. Accordingly, I took Cicero for my subject, — the death of Cicero. I fancied all sorts of fine things ; the scene on the sea-coast, the approach of the ruffian, yet licensed, murderers, the alarm of his family, their wild horror and his own dignified despair, the agony of departure, the hurry of flight and of pursuit, hope, fear, uncertainty, and at last the bloody consummation. Here was a glorious outline, and some glorious features to fill it up. I saw that it was good. I was right well content, and fell asleep in the persuasion that in another day or two I should have realized the rough sketch of my imagination.

I was up and at my work early the next morning. I struck off a few sentences that might have served very well, if I had only suffered them to stand ; but no, they were not sufficiently exact, they wanted the last polish. This or that phrase was not quite the thing, and here and there a word or two must be struck out or altered. This was the original sin. I had yet to learn, and, indeed, few writers do learn it, except by long experience, that

if I would write well I should write, to borrow a surgical term, on the first intention. I fell to blotching and tinkering, making many holes where I mended one, and then my chance was gone. I was thenceforward a lost spirit, an "*âme damnée*," in authorship.

There is but one right method in composition, that of thorough ease and freedom. Do what you will, much or little, but strain not above your strength to do it ; otherwise, if you go beyond your range but once, the longer you persist the deeper and more hopelessly are you plunged in bog, brier, and all perplexity. Of this I had full experience. I was like the young painter, who, in his anxiety to surpass himself, never knows when he has done enough, but must still be dabbling, and altering, here a touch and there a touch, till at last he succeeds in fretting and vexing his portrait into an ill-favored perversity of countenance, and finds that he has all his work to do again. Like that same painter, I had kept my eye fixed upon my subject till my vision was fairly blunted and confounded by it ; my whole faculty harassed, wearied, and worn out, from continuity of strain ; and the thing itself floated before my impotence wildly and vaguely, like the creation of a feverish dream.

"I had thought
Too long and deeply, till my brain became,
In its own eddy whirling and o'erwrought,
A boiling gulf of phantasy and flame."

Still I persevered, not in the cheerfulness of hope, but in the bitter bravery of despair. I was too proud and self-conceited to yield, — ay, even to Nature herself, until I was absolutely mastered by her. This is a sad use of a goodly instrument, — *non hos quasitum munus in usus*. Perseverance is a noble virtue when put to its proper application, when practised gradually, and orderly, and to a sure point ; otherwise, if we use it as a tyrant

ies his slave, capriciously and wantonly, we do but the madman's work ; we might as well attempt to lick a le smooth, or cut a block of stone with a razor, — the only effect will be to blunt its edge, and unfit it for its proper purposes.

I paid the full penalty of my rashness ; for a day or two I suffered cruelly. The sick headache, the *crapula* of the brain from its intellectual efforts, is worse twenty-fold than the more familiar one of the stomach from drunkenness. No torment is like that of the abortive writer. Dante, among his horrors of hell, should have given the choicest place, the abyss of all abysses, to that most suicidal of self-tormentors, — the man who would fain scale the heavens, by tearing up from the roots, and heaping together, the mountains of his own crazy imagination. The parallel will hold to the end. The lightning is armed against him, — the thunderstroke of paralysis overtakes him, — withered, seared, and blasted, the intellectual aspirant sinks into the wreck of the idiot.

I was the more dismayed at such a failure, as I had never looked to the possibility of it. In Latin I could write decently. In Greek I could string together a few words and even sentences, grammatically, at least, if not classically. I knew that my use of English was much the most familiar of the three, and therefore I presumed that I could be at no loss in it. Here, however, I was mistaken. There are good reasons why English composition should be more difficult to the schoolboy than that in the dead languages. In the first place, he learns the last grammatically, and practises composition in them. He is less conscious of the feebleness and absurdity of his notions, when expressed in a dead language, than he would be in a spoken one, — in the former, therefore, he is more confident ; and, moreover, as he is not afraid of *vulgarisms* in *Greek or Latin*, he is in a great measure

exempt while writing in them from the affectation of fine phraseology,—that pestilent sin of young authors.

This first time of my experiment, I had worried myself through the day in my vain essays in authorcraft, till I felt as if all the fibres in my brain had been crossed and tangled together. This was not enough for me. I held out still, and carried my obstinacy so far as to make a solemn vow, that I would not go to bed that night until I had done my work. I made the vow, and I was driven to make it good also. I contrived before morning, at the hazard of a nervous fever, to scribble some few pages of poor, feeble, jointless, spiritless composition. I would not rest even there. It was a glorious summer's day; and I fancied that the fresh air, the warm glow of the landscape, and the smilingness of nature, might renew the tone of my intellect by recruiting my spirits. In this hope, as soon as I was my own master, I sallied forth. I betook myself to a lonely wooded ridge, on the way to Datchet,—the Lover's Walk I believe it was called,—and there, at its extremity, on a sort of headland, looking towards Eton, I threw myself on the bank, and endeavoured to reconcile my faculties to their task. Shortly after, I heard a rustling noise in a hedge at a little distance from me. I looked in that direction, and saw a little beggarly boy, without a hat, and scarce a rag over him, peeping and peering about for a bird's nest in a bush, with as much intensioness of interest as though he had expected to find his fortune there. The spectacle went at once to my heart. What a fool am I to sit here, “and strictly meditate the thankless Muse,” while even such an urchin as that has sense enough to follow out the impulses of nature, and find his enjoyment in them! Why should I take so much trouble only to make myself miserable? The suggestion, whether reasonable or not, was at least *easy of execution*. I got up, shook myself well, as if to

ring my spirits to the surface, and throw off the damping influences collected there, and in a few short minutes was in one of Harry Carter's boats, floating lazily own the stream, in a course typical of the one adopted y me for my future moral life.

I fancied that I had thrown off my attachment once nd for ever ; but how absolute was my delusion ! The tch of writing, or, at least, that of meditating what we nay write, if we think proper, is as inveterate as the tch of gambling,

“Ulcus enim vivescit et inveterascit alendo
Inque dies gliscit furor atque ærumna grævescit.”

No man ever had a fit of it, but he had also a thousand relapses to follow it. Extricate one's self as one may for a moment, we are sure, in the strong language of the prophet, to be drawn back again as by the cart-ropes of destiny. I became subject to the rule, the common law of authorship. In no very long time I resumed the habit of composition ; I have worn it ever since, loosely, indeed, and familiarly, but yet, as far as my comfort is concerned, to good purpose. It has served me happily and well ; I would not forego it, now that I know its worth, for all the wealth of the Indies ; and here, after a sufficiently long use and experience, I give their results. If, indeed, there be any truth in the Greek adage, if suffering be really learning, then surely I must have learnt much, and those results may be of some value. My martyrdom, indeed, has not with me been the presage of my glorification. The crown has yet to be awarded to me ; but the practice has been of signal service, nevertheless ; I have learned from it to make the warm season of youth the season of my moral confirmation and advancement ; in the beautiful lines of the poet,

“The mind to strengthen and anneal
While on the stithy glows the steel.”

This, and much more, have I done for my true happiness ; and the reader, if he choose to take a lesson from my experience, may do the like ; ay, more, he may obtain the crown of glory, without the martyrdom.

The art of composition depends altogether upon that of meditation ; the two, in fact, are so closely allied as to be almost identified. By way of inducement, then, to composition, I shall begin with meditation, as the first in order.

An ingenious writer, D'Israeli, I believe, has somewhere affirmed that there is no book extant on the art of meditation. The accuracy of that author is well known, and there is no reason to suppose that it has failed him in this instance. At least, I have had access in my time to a reasonable number of catalogues and libraries, and, as I was long since sensible of the void, I have wasted many a half-hour in the search of some treatise on that subject. All that I ever found was a blank. I might as well have taken the word of D'Israeli.

But how should so excellent a faculty have remained so long in disregard ? Certainly it is not in its universality, or even in its frequency, that we are to look for our solution. So far from it, not one man in a hundred is capable of following out or connecting a chain of abstract reasoning. The access is through a narrow gate, and those who have striven in vain to enter are more numerous by far than those who have succeeded. Still less has this grand study been neglected from any general opinion of the inadequacy of its worth to its price of purchase. That thought is the key, and the only key, of all wisdom, and that the sun is author of our light, are alike truths of universal acceptance.

All this is clear and certain, and yet the art of meditation is without an expounder to this hour. The perverseness or vanity of students has attempted to raise to

the dignity of science many other subjects, in themselves sufficiently vain and useless. In politics, philology, and polemical divinity, infinite labor has been exhausted, to little good purpose. Endless have been the speculations, and furious the disputes, on mathematical, geological, and hieroglyphical puzzles ; while, in the midst of this contention, true wisdom, in our times, as formerly in those of Scripture, though she should raise her voice, and cry aloud in the streets, would be almost without a hearer. Yes, I can scarce credit my own conscience when I say it, the art of thinking, that first and noblest of our faculties ; the one universal instrument at least, if it be not the essence, of the mind ; the giver, under the Almighty, of all good gifts, moral as well as intellectual ; the life and soul, in short, of our rational nature, is as little regarded by men, and as little valued, as the blessed light of their eyes, or breath of their nostrils, — albeit as important to their moral, as these latter influences are to their physical condition. This is an astounding certainty. Not but that treatises have been published, entitled, as it pleased the extravagant humor of their authors, “the art of thinking,” but this being interpreted is found to be nothing more than the art of reasoning technically, or, in other words, that of stringing propositions into syllogisms. But to expound this is one thing, and to expound the method of meditation is a far different one. As well, to use an illustration of Aristotle, might a man who should undertake to teach the craft of shoemaking pretend to redeem his promise by taking his apprentice into a shoemaker’s shop, and showing him the stock that might happen to be set out there for sale.

To account for this, we should consider that the great bulk of mankind know nothing whatever of the art in question, are scarcely conscious even of its existence, and therefore can be in no concern about its neglect. It

is not so with the greater number of the sciences, nor with any of the ordinary arts and handicrafts. In these, a man who is ignorant of them can compare his own condition with that of his neighbour who has mastered them. He sees something palpable and substantial in their processes and results. He is at no loss to attribute the effect to the cause,—the success or failure of a mechanic, for instance, to his skill or ignorance in his craft; nor can he doubt the use of an acquirement which he sees from day to day practically and profitably applied. Whereas the art of thinking is only discernible in its results. It cannot be said of it, Lo, here! or Lo, there! It is a talisman, as secret as it is powerful; working wonders, but working them imperceptibly to the eyes of the multitude. Moreover it is a thing *positum in medio*,—it is open to all the world, and is therefore vainly believed not only to be easy of attainment, but actually in the possession of every one. To hear the word used, to observe the levity and carelessness of its application, one would suppose that thinking, in the phrase of the old play, was as easy as lying; that one had only to call it, and it must needs come,—to will it, and there it would be. Whereas, as Rousseau, who found the truth to his cost, somewhere observes, it is not only an art, but the most difficult as well as the most valuable of all. But then it shows itself by no external sign; it has no such stamp set upon it as to pass current with the vulgar; it has but little influence—necessarily, that is, and immediately—for the furtherance of wordly fortune. It is foreign to the lusts, and vanities, and fashions of mankind; and can we then wonder, that, in common with faith, charity, and the whole host of Christian virtues, it is neglected by people who know nothing of its peculiar power, and find that they can get on in the world sufficiently well without it?

One might, indeed, have expected from speculative and philosophical men something more than acquiescence in the heedlessness of the vulgar. It has, however, so happened, that even the most curious inquirers into mental philosophy have thought it enough to proceed upon an hypothesis, presuming the faculty of meditation, and then reasoning and refining upon the various subordinate powers, such as reflection, judgment, and many others, which depend upon that faculty. Whereas the better course, in my opinion, is, in the first place, to ascertain as far as may be how the capital art, that of thinking, is to be acquired, and then, if it be worth our while, to go forward to the consideration of its incidents.

It is surprising how long people may live in the world and never think at all. In strictness, scarce one man in twenty can be said to have thought so much as once during the whole course of his life ; that is, to have set himself to a subject, and reasoned it fairly out from its principles to its conclusion. This, to be sure, is done in mathematical demonstration, — and even in the lowest form of it, that of common arithmetic, — but there, as every step is a necessary one, and as discretion is not admitted, the process can scarcely be called thought, it is rather attention ; a mere listening to truth, instead of uttering it ; a watching of its formation, instead of actually forming it. However, the talent of attention and application is in itself a most valuable one, and this is conferred by such studies more generally than by any others. But as for the common actions of our life, we are governed in them almost entirely, not by our reasoning activity, but by habit and imagination. In business, in society, everywhere, in short, we speak and act so and so, from our experience of what other people have said and done in the like matter. We have a sort of floating mark, an average made up of numberless observations ;

and to that, by the mere force of conformitiveness, we adapt our practice. To borrow an illustration, we form our habits to the common rule, as we set our watches to the church-clock, without any strict inquiry as to its exactness, but rather in the consciousness that in things of indifference submission to the general rule is a greater merit than skepticism as to the reason of it. And if it ended here, if we were imitative only thus far, there would be no great mischief in it, —on the whole, perhaps, rather an advantage, — but the misfortune is, that by this habit of reliance on the common standard we get into the disuse of our reasoning faculty altogether; and from the disuse into the absolute loss of it. And hence, as to originative thought, we are most of us become mere ciphers. And yet it is this originative thought, and this only, that distinguishes science from art, reason from habit, the philosopher from the mere formalist, the man of mind from the child of circumstances.

As for myself, I am almost ashamed to confess how long it was before I began to think ; in other words, before I rose from the boyhood into the manhood of intellect. And yet I was constantly in the practice of composition. For years together I had ordinarily three exercises in a week to make out. I did them, too, as well or better than most of my schoolfellows. And still I was no more a thinker than an angel.

I will endeavour to explain this by a repetition of the process. Suppose that I had to write an essay, — the subject was ambition. I had only to ruminate on the word, and presently all sorts of images associated with it would be offered to me. With a little more brooding, such of these ideas as had any particular affinity for each other would fall together, and frame themselves into some kind of regularity, as we see in crystallization. All this time I was passive, and had only to let the subject work

on my mind and clear itself before I committed it to paper. To give an illustration or two, I was no painter, but a mere joiner of painted bits into a frame of patchwork,—compiler,—or, as the word means in Latin, a thief,—borrower of fine feathers, that might make a show upon me, but could never carry me through a flight. Unquestionably I had a sort of instinctive sense of propriety, a vague notion of what Square would call the “fitness of things,” but this was a mere habit with me. I had been used to see such and such qualities so and so attributed, and I took the forms as I found them. I never troubled myself about the analysis. In short, I did all by imagination, and nothing by originative energy,—by thought. used my facts as forms, and not as mere materials to take into forms. And, besides this, my images floated on, as it might happen, slowly or rapidly, or not at all. had no impulsive force, no oars to quicken them,—no helm to guide them.

It was by a mere accident that I became a thinker at last. Otherwise I might have gone on to this day dreaming and imagining, and knowing nothing of the quickening fluency, the strengthening discipline, of thought. It was not till I had left Eton, and been some time at the University, that the light broke in upon me. I am anticipating my subject, but it is better that the order of time should be interrupted than that the course of my narrative should be thrown out of joint. At that time I became acquainted with a set of men who regarded the University only as a field where they were come to sow their wild oats, *majorum more modoque*; as a sewer, ther, into which, as a matter of course, they were to lay off the humors of their hot blood,—their moral impurities. Drunkards were they, dog-fanciers, patrons of the ring, accomplished, in short, not “in all good grace to grace a gentleman,” but in all blackguardism to

degrade him. Hard riders, but not hard readers. Men who knew as little of the inside of a lecture-room as Falstaff did of a church ; and who held the senior wranglership to be the bathos of all human degradation. I was occasionally among them, but never a party to their outrageousness. I ran not with them to the same excess of riot. I was altogether of another spirit. I had not their forwardness and presumption, or I should probably have been as deep in viciousness as they were. One evening I had been playing cards with them ; we made a late sitting of it, and, long before the party had broken up, daylight surprised us. The rest of them went off smoking, singing, and hallooing ; as for me, I had no taste for their revelries, nor yet any disposition to go quietly to bed ; as a *tertium quid* I took up a book, and amused myself for an hour or so with the memoirs of some celebrated men contained in it, and, among others, of Charles James Fox. I am one of those politicians who hold the memory of that man in reverence, and happy I am to be still further beholden to him for a private and personal reason. It is this ; his biographer had given him credit for a quality not very likely, I should think, to have belonged to him, — that of always thinking. “ He never lost a moment,” so the account runs ; “ he was always thinking.” I suppose we are to understand by this, not that he was always engaged in actual thought, — that is, in a course of inward reasoning, — for this is an hyperbole of extravagance, but that he was always in some way at work ; attentive to some subject or object ; never surrendering himself to the influence of languor, or depression, or laziness, — a man, in short, of prevailing energy and activity.

I had often before been told to think. I had heard that I could never rise to greatness of mind by any other *method*, but the advice was lost upon me. I did not

know the meaning of the word. I believed that musing was thinking, that castle-building was thinking, that recollecting was thinking ; in short, that, if the mind were employed at all, it could only be in thinking. By this time, however, I had worn off those idle fancies. I had a general habitual notion of the truth. I had learnt to conclude, as the fact is, that thought is not in the mere occupation of the mind, but in its occupation and active exercise to a rational conclusion. This I knew, or rather, perhaps, I felt it ; but, hitherto, I had rested upon the faith ; I had never carried it out into practice, nor exemplified it by any regular series of operations in my own mind. Happily, at that moment, my understanding was open and conciliatory ; I was penetrated with the truth ; I felt as if there were some magic in the words, Think always. I fancied that by observing and practising them I should rise into an upper region, a new life, a glorified existence.

With these impressions upon me I left the room, and went out into the open air. It was in Trinity College, Cambridge. As I entered the great square and looked around me upon the buildings, impressive alike from their antiquity, their imposing mass and extent, their character of moral rather than of architectural greatness, and, above all, from the associated glories of their inmates,—of Newton, Bentley, and of one greater than either, Barrow ; together with the liberal spirit of her sons, their love of light and progress, their *παλοκάυασθια*, whereby, even though no one “bright particular star” should excel among them, their College would yet shine forth as a general galaxy of brightness ;—as I was feeding on these ideas, the thought occurred to me, Why should not I also be a partaker in their glories,—a man of intellect ? Why should I not at least try, some time or other, —*as soon as possible*, —at this moment ? The

last suggestion was the wisest. There is no moment like the present ; not only so, but, moreover, there is no moment at all, that is, no instant force and energy, but in the present. The man who will not execute his resolutions when they are fresh upon him can have no hope from them afterwards ; they will be dissipated, lost, and perished in the hurry and skurry of the world, or sunk in the slough of indolence. This I was wise enough to know. I had taken my text, “ Think always,” and I had now to discourse upon it. The walks were just thrown open, and I went, “ alone and pensive,” to put my thoughts in train under the chestnut row of Trinity.

I chose some ethical subject from Paley, and endeavoured to work it out, *proprio marte*. I had some leading notions upon it in my mind. They looked well enough and sure enough, as long as they remained in their places ; but, as soon as I began to set them in motion, they fell into sad disorder, hampered each other, made a kind of blindman’s buff of their game, and came to no proper issue,—in short, I failed. I gave myself a moment’s breathing time, and tried again, but failed still. For an hour together I kept stumbling and blundering on through a series of failures, and at last gave it up, and returned home discomfited. Afterwards, from time to time, as I had occasion, I continued the practice, and nineteen times out of twenty with the same result. In fact, it is at first a very difficult thing—almost an impossible one, except in very rare cases—to think continuously. It is the harvest of mental cultivation. The seed is thrown in, and for a time is only in fermentation. A man of no experience would have no hope of it,—the end is not yet ; we should wait patiently until the ripeness of time, and so we shall make our profit.

On that occasion, as on many others after it, until I had paid the full price of my experience, I defeated my

purpose by my over-anxiety. I was diffident of myself. I entered upon my train of thought, not as a matter of course, but as a task of difficulty and doubtfulness. This was not the way to succeed. Meditation comes not by constraint, — like Love, so she also,

“At sight of human ties;
Spreads her light wings, and in a moment flies.”

She is a virgin that can be won by those only who woo her with a smiling countenance. Whereas I went to work with a frowningness of brow, an overbearingness of spirit, and a sentiment of arduous enterprise, — just as if I were leading a forlorn hope to storm a fortress. This was mischievously devised, — but it is our common mischief. Few are there among us all who can or will understand that excellence is the immediate offspring of ease, until they have learnt their lesson from the repetition of their agonies, through repeated violences against their nature, and of course as many entire failures. The absurdity of this is evident, — but the evidence is only for those who can compare the one practice with the other. It is only from the vantage-ground of truth that we can survey and trace out the labyrinth of our former errors. To look for thought upon compulsion is as unreasonable to the expert judgment as to expect a growth of flowers from the battery of the hail-storm, or the wooing of the east wind. It is to the kindness of the sun, the geniality of a warm atmosphere, and the mild influence of the April shower, that the earth will give forth its increase joyously and plenteously. Then, as the poet tells us, “*Laxant arva sinus.*” I am not sure that I have not mistaken the meaning of this passage. The harvest, perhaps, is intended by it, and not the seedtime, — but let that pass. I will only add, that the regulation of our intellect and that of our religion depend in very many cases upon the same rules, and in this remarkably so.

When we are brought to the “session of sweet, silent thought,” we should take no care, we should not *efforce* ourselves, to borrow a French word, as to what we are to say or write, — the spirit itself should dictate to us in that hour.

Rousseau tells us in his Confessions, that his best thinking hours were invariably his walking hours also ; that his bodily motion — *ebranla* — stirred into activity his mind, set ago the movement of his mental clockwork. He was in the habit, principally from this persuasion, of making long tours on foot into distant regions, — intellectual pilgrimages, like those religious ones of old made by our devout forefathers. His spiritual and corporeal man were in absolute sympathy. When his body was inert so was his mind also.

For myself, I have no faith in the analogy ; else must I believe, perforce, that the clown should be of finer wit than the harlequin. But, in good simple truth, it was not so with me when I was a boy, with a fund of spirits as inexhaustible as the rich man’s melancholy ; still smaller is the likelihood of it in these my instant days, when my oil, so far from overflowing, suffices just, and but barely, to save my poor little light from sinking into darkness. This analogy is a weapon of two edges, a thing of back-handed use, a self-quarrelling kind of creature ; one may pit one against the other, and see them pick each other’s eyes out. And here I believe it to be false. For instance, observe Dame Partlet ; she is a wise old soul ; she sits brooding and brooding on, heedless of impertinences, and would sooner crush all her hopes into a yellow mess than leave her incubancy but for a moment, — and so I brood over my thoughts ; otherwise, the eggs in the one case, and in the other my poor brain, if either were stirred superfluously, must infallibly become addle. Pity that I am no parson, else I should be as good an incum-

bent as the laziest of them. Away with your kittenish alacrity ! such gambollers are no good mousers, — watchfulness it is, and patience, and acquiescence, that does the business. Station, state, and understanding, with all their derivatives, are words of honor, and by them I stand zealously, — *verbo tenus*, albeit politically an agitator, — one addicted to the movement. But for my peculiar experience, when I am in my good arm-chair, with my books and pictures around me, my fire flickering before me, my fancy stirring within, and my reason, like my outward eye, in a kind of twilight existence, — then I am in my Paradise. At such times, to move me would be death at once to my quickening conceptions, — a sort of intellectual infanticide.

However, at that time I was full of Rousseau. I had just been reading his *Emile*, and, as I took almost every thing from him on trust, I carried on my peripatetic course a little further. By the by, that same course might have led to very prosperous issues, practised as it was in the old Athenian groves by Aristotle, Plato, and their followers ; but their walks were conversational ; they took their turns at the subject, and lighted from each other's lamps ; or, to speak more properly, struck their lights out from collision ; but this is a very different thing from the continuation of thought by a single mind, and, moreover, a much easier one. I speak here of novices, — of the apprenticeship to thought ; as for those who are practised in it, who are become thorough thinkers, they can command themselves and their subjects at all times and places. They are above the hurry and skurry of this nether world, or at least can rise above it when they please. The camp, city, or church, the court or cloister, are all one to them for their purpose.

And so I set myself again to think in walking, — a much more difficult achievement for a beginner than

to shoot flying, though easy enough to the proficient. Like Bellerophon in the Aleian fields, I used to wander about literally, as it is in the Greek, consuming my own mind, avoiding the tread of men. The consumption would have been complete, had I continued obstinately to force my own resources. But I had found by this time that I had not capital enough to trade upon,—no original moving power sufficient to set my mental machinery at work, and so to keep it. Very wisely, then, I condescended to draw upon other funds, to avail myself of ministerial help in my scramble up an ascent so steep. Upon this hint, I determined to take to myself some archetype; to lay up in my memory the outline and main features of some argument or essay; and then, after the lapse of time, to endeavour to reproduce them,—in short, as the lawyers say, to draw from precedent. Hume's history was my model; if, indeed, it deserves to be called a history, when one might designate it more justly by dividing the word, and describing it as his, that is Hume's, story. However, there were plenty of facts, or pretended facts given, and plenty of reflections to be supplied,—it was therefore well enough for my particular purpose, though for its own general one it is good for mighty little.

I entered upon my course of experiments, following in the main, but occasionally varying, and supplying, and enlarging the plan before me, or, I should say, my remembrance of it. This in itself is an exceedingly useful practice, but it was then above my power, and beyond the point of my advancement. The result was a necessary one; nine times out of ten I failed in my endeavour.

It was a perpetual up-hill strain to me; a real Sisyphean labor. There was not motive enough in my meditation to attain the point whence it would have gone on

of itself smoothly and steadily along an inclined plane ; but down it would come, as soon as the effort of its emission was spent, in all the deadness of its weight, upon its author. I was unable to sustain myself. The fact is, that the source of my thought was not deep nor copious enough to supply such a stream as could make its way onward against the counteracting influence of ideas from without, of external repellents.

Some great river in America, the Oroonoco I think, is said to flow into the sea with such a mighty rush of waters as to beat back the currents of the Atlantic leagues before it, and spread itself far and wide into the ocean. So does every great mind, but so did not mine. This perpetual warfare, this conflict between the sea and river, is nobly described by Scott in Rokeby,—

“ Where Oroonoco in his pride
Hurls on the main no tribute tide ”;

but I have not the book in my possession, nor the lines in my memory. Something of the same kind, and still more to my purpose, is said of the arrowy Rhone, and its passage clear, distinct, and impetuous, like that of a javelin in the air, through the Lake of Geneva.

This is the very perfection of thought,— to fly with an assured flight, holding itself together, free from all diffusion, and from all mixture of collateral ideas or influences, and darting like a comet into space with its luminous track behind it, never to return until its full range, its appointed period, be completed. *Hic labor hoc opus est.* But this is a giant's work. We may go on to say with the poet,—

“ Pauci quos æquūs amavit
Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad æsthera virtus,
Diis geniti, potuere.”

I was not of the elect. There was a law in my members, in my outward senses that is, warring against the

law of my mind, and bringing it into captivity. Gradually I used to fall back into my passiveness. Like the Galatians, I began in the spirit and ended in the flesh.

I need hardly say, that, as long as I followed this study, I followed it in solitude. I might have been advised better. Could I have gained the fruits of experience without its process, I should have done otherwise; as I am persuaded that conversation, grounded of course on previous reading and reflection, is the best method of advancement for the novice. I have said as much elsewhere, and given my reasons for the sentence. I have only now to regret that my wisdom in this respect was of so late growth, that it came lagging in after the consumption of much mischief that it might have prevented.

Be this as it may, I fancied at that time that the searcher after wisdom, like the digger for hidden treasure, according to the vulgar superstition, must work in silence and in solitude. This, then, was my method : I sequestered myself as much as possible ; I avoided the busy hum of men, and gave myself up, for “ all custom of exercise,” to walks by the river-side, or along some remote village footpath. Here I had my own way ; but, with all this artifice of abstraction, I found that I had not yet force enough for the exercise of continuous thought, the mastery of my mind. Nor was it merely that I failed, but my failure was a mischievous one ; the violence of my efforts did me a positive injury. After the ill success of these experiments, I felt that my mind was strained, as one’s arm may be by a blow aimed rashly, and spent idly in the air.

On this point I have a piece of advice to offer to all young intellectual aspirants : they should keep their crudities to themselves ; they should not produce their notions until they have wrought them into form. I did the *contrary* of this myself, and I smarted severely for it.

In the first place, I used to confuse myself with the perplexity of my thoughts,—half-conceptions, abortions of truth, that came to the birth when my mind had not strength to bring them forth,—monsters begotten out of the cloud, like those in the old fable. With Cas-sio, I saw a mass of things, but nothing distinctly. I had chosen my own points of observation ; I viewed many things differently from the vulgar, but my visions for some time, until my eye was accustomed to the change, were wont to float before me vaguely and inap-prehensibly. I had rejected the hack-notions, the uses of other men, and had as yet made none for myself that I could call properly my own. What, then, would have been my wisdom ? Clearly, to reserve these rough sketches of my intellect for secret service, and not to set them forth for show ; to veil from the vulgar eye the un-seemliness of my mind, while in its rudiments ; to employ it in its “airy portraiture” for exercise, in order that it might so learn to labor finally for use ; just as the young painter will work off a hundred sketches for the fire, be-fore he can finish one for public exhibition. In the mean time I should have holden to the old adage, “*Loquendum ut vulgus, sentiendum ut docti.*” I should have talked and demeaned myself like mere matter-of-fact men, until I felt that I had risen to the level of men of mind, and had attained the mastery of their method. I should have let my raw fruit hang and sun itself upon the tree, till it was penetrated with ripeness, and would come away easily upon the touch of a little finger. I ought not to have torn it off violently and with difficulty, while its hu-mors were yet crude, to the laceration of the parent tree, the torture of my own inward man. But I was not then so philosophical as my after-experience has made me. I was only anxious to get on, and in that anxiety, as usually happens, I made much more haste than good speed.

I have said that at my best, even when I was alone, I was but a futile thinker. This being so, if I could not make myself a fair game when I was playing alone, with the cards in my own hands to deal and distribute at my pleasure, there was but small hope that I should be more successful when I had to contend, as in society, against the ordinary chances and set antagonists. Nevertheless, I adventured myself; I forced my owlishness into the glare; I brought my pigs, such as they were, starved, shapeless weaklings, into the market of society. I got the habit, and there is no viler one upon earth, of uttering sententious sayings upon mere trifles, of building heavily upon the sticks and straws of conversation. I was always laboring to sound deep, even where the channel of discourse was itself shallow; and, of necessity, all that I got for my pains was to stir up the mud from the bottom, and obscure the stream by my sheer leaden stupidity. Like a fond and foolish father, I forgot that though I might be interested in my callow speculations, merely because they were my own, yet something else was required,—some stamp of sterling merit,—to recommend them to the acceptance of others. This was wanting. It was in vain that I endeavoured to pass off my rude ore as current coin,—no one would accept it; and probably the urgency of my tender only procured me the advantage of a doubtful reputation,—either that I was half a madman or wholly a fool. Hence, I was continually on the fret; vexed with myself, dissatisfied with others; distracted by a threefold warfare,—intestine, social, and external.

It is from this propensity of young thinkers to overstrain their reach, at the hazard of all kinds of ridiculous falls and failures, that many people have got the notion that a man of high intellect is almost invariably a strange, uncomely, untoward, offensive, and captious creature, *one of the genus irritabile*,—a wasp in temper. This

is a thorough mistake. I never in my life knew a man of high intellect who was not withal kind, agreeable, ready-witted, and, above all, highly amiable. It is scarce possible that it should be otherwise. A machine that works well cannot fail to work smoothly and pleasantly. We are not apt, while we are playing a winning game, to lose either our temper or our presence of mind. A man of genius indeed may chance to be fretful and unconventional, as some few of them certainly are ; but then he must be a rude, undisciplined genius,—a man of high intellect he can hardly be. It is your ambitious novice, your scrambler up the ascent, that is so generally during his probation a stumbling, slipping, nervous, and fretful blunderer ; all this for a very simple reason, — because he is never sure of his ground, and therefore cannot command himself. It is only in the process of transformation that the creature is feeble and purblind, inconsistent, purposeless, and helpless. This sort of imperfection is a middle term ; the lower as well as the higher natures, the vulgar and intellectual, are alike exempt from it. We may say of it what Cowley has said so admirably of something else,—

“ Vain shadow, which doth vanish quite,
Both at full noon and perfect night.”

But to return to my meditative processes, and to their effects ; I continued to practise them in solitude, but to little good purpose. Never were patience and perseverance more severely proved. Often after I had endeavoured for hours together to think a subject out, with no other result but a headache, the throes and pangs of the laboring brain without its delivery, I determined to throw the chances up, and live carelessly, after the fashion of my fellows. But I could never enforce the edict ; the restraining power was invariably too strong. It often happens, *that, when we relinquish a good principle, its*

attractive force increases in proportion as we withdraw from it. Our regrets are aggravated into remorse. It is no vain imprecation that of the poet,

“Virtutem videant, intabescantque relictâ,”

and it is one frequently realized.

Accordingly I went on in my old practices some time longer. I had chosen a fitting scene for them ; my *genius loci* was a congenial one. There is a village called Cherry-Hinton, lying wide of any highway, and within two or three miles of Cambridge. The footpath to it is crossed midway, or thereabouts, by a little brook, and that brook itself, accompanied by a pathway, winds its unambitious way onward to the village, through certain rich corn-fields and solitary meadows. This was my usual walk, my path of contemplation. From some unaccountable neglect, it was very little frequented, though in itself as pretty as any out of Cambridge. Scarcely was it trodden, save by a few late and early market-goers, and, haply, now and then a milkwoman. *Vilia delectant vulgus* ; the dusty footpath, with the chance of an occasional gossip, was more to the taste of the commonalty than the modest, half-worn track, the verdure, the coolness, the sequestration,—in a word, the poetry, of my own choice. I was in no danger of interruption by my sporting friends, who would have stared at me in such a spot as if they had seen a ghost, and regarded me ever afterwards as a man under a cloud,—as one addicted to strange solitary habits.

I remember one day I had racked myself out of all patience in my attempts to overthink a subject, to master it by the sheer force of thought. In a state of exhaustion and discomfiture I leant against a gate-post, and suffered my sight to rest upon the surface of the stream, and amuse itself by the objects carried down by it. There

was an angle of the bank close by, and I indulged myself some time in the idle speculation, whether or not the sticks or straws that I saw floating along might chance to double it. My mind was martyred with its distractions, and it occurred to me, by a sudden thought, that here was a way to put an end to them. I marked a particular straw in its descent, and made an earnest vow, that, accordingly as it should pass the promontory or fail to do so, I would persist or not in my thoughtfulness, — that, as the straw might rule me, I would strive onwards through a host of pains and penalties, or else retire at once from the contest, and, as the negroes say, "sit down softly," content to be a common man, — one of the mere vulgar.

My determination was strong at the moment, — so strong, that I am by no means sure that it was not decisive, that it has not governed my destinies ever since. Well, I watched my pilot-boat as it came down, — *Fortanam vehis*, — so I might have apostrophized it, in all Cæsarian dignity. It passed gently on. Here and there it met with an obstruction, but it was only for a moment ; it doubled the cape, — the Cape of Good Hope as it really was for me. I received the augury with all acceptance, and returned with a light heart.

Somehow or other after this incident, whether by force of it or from whatever cause, I got into a better vein. I abandoned once for all the part of the self-tormenter. I forbore to force myself. I suffered my mind like a froward child, to fall asleep, and so recover itself from the excitement of its frowardness. Instead of hallooing on when I had overrun the scent, I drew back quietly and cannily to the point where I was last sure of it, — *relegens errata retrorsum*, — and endeavoured to hit it off afresh. I returned from thought to literature ; from my late hard taskmaster to my former gentle mistress. I

read at large. I roved about at my free will in the wide and varied common of our College library, with no other condition than that of commenting in my own mind, as I went along, upon every book that I might be reading, and every chapter of that book. This was the best restorative process imaginable. I soon got heart of grace upon it, and recruited the exhaustion of my spirits. I found it was but lost pains to attempt to add a cubit to my intellectual stature by force of thinking. I took better counsel, and resigned all care of my growth to time, patience, and steady, but gentle perseverance. "*Chi va piano,*" say the Italians, "*va lontano,*" and I soon found, that, instead of racking myself to no purpose, as I had done heretofore, I was gradually making way, and widening my circle.

My wayfarings to this village of fruitful, though, for any thing that I could ever learn, fallacious entitlement, — this village with a name that waters on one's tongue, though it keeps not the word of promise to one's palate, — my pilgrimages, I say, thither were of good account to me through another mere accident. One day, on my return, I was driven to take shelter from a rain-storm in a little hovel by the road-side, — a sort of cobbler's stall. The tenant and his son were upon their work, and, after the customary use of greetings, I entered familiarly into talk with them, as indeed I always do, seeing that your cobbler is often a man of contemplative faculty, — that there is really something of mystery in his craft. Before I had been with them long, the old man found that there lacked something for his work, and in order to provide it he sent his son out on a job of some five minutes. The interval was a short one, but it was too long for his active impatience ; he became uneasy, shuffled about the room, and at last took up a scrap or two of leather and fell to work upon them. "For," said he, "it will never do,

you know, Sir, to be idle, — not at any rate, — I should faint away."

I happened just then to be in an impressible mood, without occupation myself, and weighed somewhat down by the want of it ; accordingly the phrase, the oddness of it in the first place, and still more the sense, made a deep and lasting impression upon me. As soon as the rain had spent itself, I went my way homeward, ruminating and revolving what I had heard, like a curious man over a riddle. I could not have bestowed my thoughts better ; the subject concerned me nearly, it went to the very heart of my happiness. Some people are perpetual martyrs to idleness, others have only their turns and returns of it ; I was of the latter class, — a reluctant, impatient idler ; nevertheless I was so much within the mischief as to feel that the words came home to me. They stung my conscience severely, they were gall and wormwood for me. Nevertheless I dwelt so long, albeit unwillingly, upon the expression, that I became as it were privy to it, I was in a condition to feel and revere its efficacy ; I determined to make much of it, to realize it in use, to act it out.

I had heard and read repeatedly that idleness is a very great evil, but the censure did not appear to me to come up to the real truth. I began to think that it was not only a very great evil, but the greatest evil, — and not only the greatest one, but in fact the only one, — the only mental one, I mean ; for of course, as to morality, a man may be very active, and very viciously active, too. But the one great sensible and conceivable evil is that of idleness. No man is wretched in his energy. There can be no pain in a fit ; a soldier at the full height of his spirit, and in the heat of contest, is unconscious even of a wound ; the orator in the full flow of rhetoric is altogether *exempt from the pitifulness of gout and rheumatism.*

To be occupied, in its first meaning, is to be possessed as by a tenant,—and see the significance, the reality, of first meanings. When the occupation is once complete, when the tenancy is full, there can then be no entry for any evil spirit; but idleness is emptiness; where it is, there the doors are thrown open, and the devils troop in.

The words of the old cobbler were oracular to me. They were constantly in my thoughts, like the last voice of his victim in those of the murderer; my mind was pregnant with them; the seed was good, and sown in a good soil,—it brought forth the fruit of satisfaction.

It is the odds and ends of our time, its orts and offals, laid up, as they usually are, in corners, to rot and stink there, instead of being used out as they should be,—these, I say, are the occasions of our moral unsoundness and corruption; a dead fly, little thing as it is, will spoil a whole box of the most precious ointment; and idleness, if it be once suffered, though but for a brief while, is sure, by the communication of its listless quality, to clog and cumber the clockwork of the whole day. It is the ancient enemy,—the old man of the Arabian Tales. Once take him upon your shoulders, and he is not to be shaken off so easily.

I had a notion of these truths, and I framed my plan after their rules; I resolved that every minute should be occupied by thought, word, or act, or, if none of these, by intention; vacancy was my only outcast, the scapegoat of my proscription. For this my purpose, I required a certain energy of will, as indeed this same energy is requisite for every other good thing of every sort and kind; without it we are as powerless as grubs, noisome as ditch-water, vague, loose, and unpredestinate as the clouds above our heads. However, I had sufficient of this energy to serve me for that turn; I felt the excellence of the practice, I was penetrated with it

through all my being, I clung to it, I cherished it. I made a point of every thing ; I was active, brisk, and animated (O, how true is that word !) in all things that I did, even to the picking up of a glove, or asking the time of day. If I ever felt the approach, the first approach, of the insidious languor, I said at once within myself, In the next quarter of an hour, I will do such a thing, and, *presto*, it was done, — and much more than that into the bargain ; my mind was set in motion, my spirits stirred and quickened, and raised to their proper height. I watched the cloud, and dissipated it at its first gathering, as well knowing, that, if it could grow but to the largeness of a man's hand, it would spread out everywhere, and darken my whole horizon.

O, that this example might be as profitable to others as the practice has been to myself ! How rich would be the reward of this book, if its readers would but take it to heart in this one article ; if the simple truths that it here speaks could prompt them to take their happiness into their own hands, and learn the value of industry, not from what they may have heard of it, but because they have themselves tried and felt it ! In the first place, its direct and immediate value, — inasmuch as it quickens, and cheers, and gladdens every moment that it occupies, and keeps off the Evil One by repelling him at the outposts, instead of admitting him to a doubtful, perhaps a deadly, struggle in the citadel ; and again its more remote, but no less certain, value, — as the mother of many virtues, when it has once grown into a temper of the mind ; and the nursing mother of many more. And if we gain so much by its entertainment, how much more must we not lose by its neglect ! Our vexations are annoying to us, the disappointments of life are grievous, its calamities deplorable, its indulgences and lusts sinful, but our idleness is worse than all these, and more painful, and

more hateful, and in the amount of its consequences, if not in its very essence, more sinful than even sin itself; just as the stock is more fruitful than any branch that springs from it. In fine, do what you will, only do something, and that actively and energetically. Read, converse, sport, think, or study, the whole range is open to you, only let your mind be full, and then you will want little or nothing to fulfil your happiness.

I found, after a short practice, that I was making some considerable way in my new method,—my method of gentleness and good-will. Had I tried it to the utmost, had I gone with it the full length that it could have carried me, I should have become probably at the conclusion an elegant scholar, a man of taste and judgment in my particular pursuits of general learning and literature ; in short, as our grandfathers would have said, an ingenious man. But I should have been nothing more. After the experience that I have just mentioned, I was still very far indeed from the mastery of my mind, the power of doing what I would with my own, the ready use, and, much more, the complete command of my faculties. Never, in short, could I so have attained the prerogative of high talent, nor have I attained it even now. True, most true. But the path has been open to me. The default has been that of my own tardiness, my neglect to pursue it steadily and perseveringly when I had once entered upon it.

I had observed that I thought upon a subject most readily when I undertook to speak upon it,—that my thinking and speaking powers were in close alliance. But the observation was not a pregnant one ; it produced nothing ; it was good, but to no good purpose ; had I carried it out, it might have gone far to explain the whole mystery, but there it lay, and I made no use of it. As to the fact itself, I would just mention that it is of no unfrequent ex-

perience. It happens, oftentimes, that your orator is bad at composition ; Fox, Curran, Erskine, and a host of others, could make no more than a very poor show of their strength when they drew it out on paper. In fact it would be difficult to name half a dozen great orators who have been great writers also. The difference of the two methods is this, — the speaker requires excitement. Like a watch, if he be but wound up to a certain pitch, he will go for hours together. Whatever he may have in him, if he have confidence withal, it is pretty sure to be developed, and even expanded into a larger amplitude than its own. His spirit rises to the height — the arduousness if you will — of his enterprise. The consciousness of his situation is a spur to him. The fellow-feeling of his audience, the impression that he makes upon them, induce him to go on. His mind is prompted by his voice ; the energy of his language, the force and variety of his intonations, carry him beyond his ordinary self ; the breath of popular applause fans him into a blaze. Whereas, if you shut up the same man in his own room, you bring the spirit of the captive over his mind. His forces fall back upon him, his imagination becomes torpid, the current of his thoughts is brought to a dead pause. Leave him to his meditations, and you leave him for the most part to mere vacancy. His vein flows no longer. The light of the public eye, the spark of public sympathy that should fire the train, is withdrawn from him, — and so he sinks into darkness.

We see that the same thing is perpetually taking place even in conversation. It is true that we think in words, and therefore all good thinkers (barring excessive nervousness from disuse of society or unfitness for it) are sure to be good talkers. But we may be very tolerable talkers, and yet no thinkers at all. Witness all the daughters of Eve, the whole “*regne de féminie.*” Give

them but an impulse from without, and they will go on interminably. No matter how slight the motive, a hair-trigger will discharge them, the merest hint of gossip will set them off, — but a motive, an external motive, they must have. They can no more reason by themselves than they can produce children. I am speaking of the general rule, and I am content of course to make all due allowance for the exceptions.

To fall back upon my poor self. One would have supposed that this result should have set me upon inquiring into the cause, and upon strengthening it, when I had found it out, by a frequent repetition of it. While I was training myself to think, I should have taken care in the first trials to choose only rhetorical subjects, — subjects that might warm my heart and excite my faculties, and so raise me up to a fair starting-point. This being provided, I should have taken the character of a speaker ; I should have acted at first what I intended to do in earnest afterwards ; I should have practised my mind on ground where it could go readily and easily ; I should have run it in a groove until I found that I could work its machinery, and then to the high-roads. All this I might have done, and should have done. But experience is a thing of posthumous birth, an *ex post facto* wisdom ; it comes when all is done, with the preposterousness of its saws and sentences. It was too late for my service ; but I commend it with all earnestness of commendation to that of others.

I have proceeded thus far with the progress of my meditative faculty, but here I must stop short. To go yet further just now would be to anticipate too much. The development of my mind is the consummation of my book. To give the catastrophe before the close is to mar the plot altogether ; to break the back of my

story, and force it on afterwards like a wounded snake cumbrously and trainingly,—

“ O, ‘t were as tedious as is a twice-told tale,”

and as all the other items of tediousness enumerated by Shakspeare. I say, then, let every thing, and this among the rest, abide its time. The end is not yet. The course of my narrative will bring me on to it in due season.

I have scattered here and there some hints about a certain instinct of development, a consciousness of power that I felt, and could not rest for it, but was always fitful and impatient until I had done it justice. I have also spoken of certain essays, and those very far short of complete success, whereby I would fain have carried out this instinct to its issue ; as, for instance, in the way of English prose composition, oratory, and sundry others. Once or twice, too, about this time, just as the bloom was upon me, in my sixteenth or seventeenth year, I tried my hand at versification, and with no such ill effect. I have yet one or two scraps of poetry, as well genuine as translated, laid up in my memory ; wine from my own vineyard, smothered, and so best preserved in all the zest of its raciness, by the sawdust, the dry, minute sawdust, of my legal studies. Poetry I called it, — ay, and real poetry it is ; it leaves the right savor upon the palate ; it breathes the true spirit. But strange to say, — for this generally is a fashion that wears the spring out, and lasts far into the summer, — I never persevered long in it, though nobody is more passionate for poetry than I am, or was, rather, for now it is only the affection that one feels for one’s first love, when one has been years married to a second. My abandonment — I do not mean of the love, Heaven forbid ! but of the courtship — was partly, I believe, from selfishness, — *from a notion that I had, and not a very wrong*

one either, that to succeed in poetry — I mean according to a moderate measure of success, and I could never have reached any higher — was the way to fail, ay, almost infallibly, in the world. I did not then know how great, how magnificent, how archangelic a nature is that of the true poet ; how high, ay, high above all other dignities upon earth, save that of virtue itself, — where-with, moreover, it has much closeness of communion and not a little of identity. Besides, I was obliged every week to write a copy of Latin verses, and so was practised in the craft. Whereas of English I had no use, and therefore comparatively small skill ; I might well have said it absolutely, but no matter. However, I left the practice off. I enjoyed it, but freely, and at my own pleasure. I was never brought to make a mistress of it. Upon this abandonment I gave myself up, by way of variety, — but, O, what a falling off was there ! — to music ? no ; to gamesomeness or debauchery ? not at all ; to reading loose books, to flute-puffing, or fiddle-scraping ? — no, to none of these, — but what then ? simply, to play-acting.

Somebody has said, and he too a man of mark, if I am not mistaken, that play-writing is the highest effort of genius. There I must put in my protest, — I always understood that prerogative to belong to poetry ; but if he had said, as no less a personage than Lord Bacon actually lays it down, that play-acting is one of the best exercises of genius, I should not have ventured to gainsay him. It is good in its proper use for all the reasons that rhetorical exercises are good, and for some besides ; albeit, as I admit, nothing is more execrably bad in its abuse. It is a good handmaid, but the worst of all possible mistresses. It is the only thing I know that is worth while to do, and yet better to do indifferently than perfectly well. I mean for one's own sake, not of course

for that of one's audience, and I am speaking of its effect on very young people.

What they want principally is accommodativeness and confidence, a deliberate, undertoned, modest, and deep-seated confidence, conscious of its own deficiencies, and determined to supply them ; and both these good qualities are likely to accrue to them from the practice of acting, when used fairly and discreetly. But the effect must depend very much on the disposition of the subject. If a boy be orderly and modest, the practice works well upon him ; but, if he be confident of himself, the more chances are there that it will puff up his confidence into self-conceit, — aye, and arrogance intolerable. This kind of confidence is as mischievous as the other is good ; instead of aiming at any thing above it, it is full of its self-inflated merits, and cares for nothing else ; it rests upon what it has got, and makes much of it, and of itself also on the strength of it, — as the French say, “*Pourtant il se fait valoir*” ; it contrives to get credit upon a very little, — just as the juggler seems to multiply his balls by his dexterous management of them, — and therefore it is in no concern to acquire a great deal ; it is entirely satisfied with itself, and of course can never get beyond itself. This sort of confidence is a very pestilence of both heart and mind ; there is no hope of it. It is like varnish spread upon a picture before the colors are well fixed, — it spoils its subject infallibly ; and, where the disposition to it exists, nothing is more likely to realize it, to degrade the boy into a manikin, than this mania of acting.

But it so happened that I was never of this category. On the contrary, shyness and nervousness were main constituents of my nature. The quality of my clay required much kneading ere it could be moulded to any use ; accordingly I became an actor, and was put through many parts to my very signal benefit.

In the first place, I got rid, in a great measure, of my reserve ; I was obliged to talk boldly, and strut boldly, and laugh boldly, and gesticulate boldly ; all this I did, and not very much amiss. In fact the most nervous men are not unfrequently, when forced into action, the most daring and decisive. Their nervousness arises generally from an excess of feeling, and that excess, when thrown into a special channel, may carry head far onward, sharply and impetuously. To be short, I had my turn, whether as emperor, lord, peasant, or waiter at an inn. I took things as they came, from the diadem to the fool's feather, and used them contentedly, according to the nature of their use,— and this as a boy. Would that in after life I had played my part as philosophically. Extremes, they say, suggest each other. The fact undoubtedly is so, and may serve me as an excuse for passing, as I intend now to do, from the subject last in discussion to another the most opposite to it.

It may have been a matter of surprise that I should never anywhere throughout this work have dwelt upon the subject of religion, barely even so much as touched upon it ; but taken my stand there, assuredly I never have. And this in a book on self-instruction ! as if religious feeling were not to the full as necessary to the life of the soul, as the soul is to the life of the body ; as if the mind itself without it could be any thing more than a machine,— a machine it may be, and often is, of exquisite cunning, and most marvellous operation, but still a palpable machine, and one of mere worldly mechanism, the creature of man himself, and the one only thing created by him bearing upon its face and throughout its composition no single token of divinity, no stamp of the Almighty, not a mark whereby he might claim it for his own,— in short, a mere human invention.

This, I believe, is true, and the truth implies the se-

verest of all possible censures on me, or my instructors. But it must be spoken nevertheless. I am not exhibiting myself as a model ; I profess nothing more than simply to draw after the life. The fact is, that at that time, and long afterwards, I had no real concern with religion. How was it possible that I should ? The good things of the spirit come not but with culture, and my mind for these purposes had hitherto been a mere waste. Of course my religious exercises of the nursery, my repetition of collects and the like, must go for nothing. They were far too abstruse for me. They were not that sincere milk of the Word recommended by the Apostle as the only fit aliment of children. If they had any effect at all, it was only to connect the idea of religion in my mind with that of restraint and drudgery, an association afterwards much strengthened by the Eton practice of requiring from the boys attendance at chapel on the morning and evening of every holyday, as if the authorities there had been determined that our holydays should be given us in the etymological sense only, and not in the popular one. However this may be, I recommend the practice to their revision. They might think it to be good, but we boys, who were the only parties concerned, knew it to be most mischievous ; we felt it so then, and we judge it so now, advisedly and deliberately.

On the whole, then, I was entirely irreligious ; I do not mean antireligious, — I would not have it supposed that the leaven of infidelity was at work within me ; but I knew nothing whatever, and cared nothing, and thought nothing about real religion ; I was utterly indifferent to it, and indifference in things of religion is the worst of all possible conditions. If a man hate it, it may yet be well with him. The truth of it is so powerful, and so beautiful, and so lovely withal, that, if we only feel at all towards it, *we are almost certain to feel right at last* ; but indiffer-

ence gives no hold, it is a mere negative cipher, nothing can be done with it.

It is true I had an abhorrence of infidelity. I shuddered at the very name of any notorious freethinker as at the sight of a toad or serpent. But I took it altogether upon trust, it was a mere aversion,—a very different thing, of course, from a rational opposition. And again, as on the one hand I execrated infidelity, so also, on the other, in order to keep my balance even and hold the middle course of worldliness, I liked what I called Methodism full as little,—I might have said much less, and so been a good deal nearer to the truth. Infidelity, in point of fact, concerned me, abstractedly considered, very little. I could talk with a Turk or Persian, and think none the worse of him for his religion. It was an evil of a thousand miles off,—a report of the plague in China, or of the cholera in Hindostan; as Homer says, there were very many darkly wooded mountains and bellowing seas between us; but Methodism was something intolerable to me, a plant of home growth, spreading and waxing under my eyes, stinking under my very nostrils, and so much the more so, and the more despitefully, as it was used scornfully, and crushed and trampled under my feet.

What business had they with so much of the commodity? They were debasing its estimation; cheapening it by throwing such a glut upon the market. I held religion to be a sort of cordial, a thing to be used occasionally among one's friends and acquaintances, to be kept by one in case of a sudden alarm, to be had in readiness against extreme sicknesses, appropriate by long custom for death-bed rooms and before funerals, but as a solitary habit I took it to be fraught with danger, worthy of all solemnity of reprobation.

In fact, I was unreasonable, because I felt, though I

ded not to know, that religion and worldly service to yoke-fellows. They would not draw together ; t dismiss one or the other of them. Habit, exam-rejudice, prevailed against the truth ; my selfishness alarmed. Why should they be always working to me wiser and better against my will ? a pest upon meddling officiousness ! — and so all that I have oved and cherished is to pass for nothing, — worse han that, to be renounced as lust and vanity, the f the precious soul, the instrument of the devil ! a sacrifice was too much for me ; I could not bring to forego my pride and worldliness, and vain edge, and be content to receive the kingdom of as a little child. But the alternative was open ; e the other side, — the evil part. I decided vain- i wilfully, and wrongfully, and therefore the more itely.

his state of mind, to read a really pious book, to ne conversation or observe the conduct of a pious , was the bitterness of wormwood to me. I could dure that the single safe refuge of such an one be better worth to him than all the twists, and and tricks that worldly discipline could teach me ; aware that the light of their lamp made my dark- ie more visible, and I hated it accordingly. My tor- less of practice and of purpose was convicted and nned by their simple rule of faith ; it is no wonder, hat their image was intolerable to me, that I could easy in their presence.

it such people should be so presumptuous, that they preclude us by their example from the hopeful plea orance, that they should set the standard of Chris- so high as to expose their brethren to fall short of consequently to fail of their salvation, was in my udgment the most damnable of all heresies. I was

well enough content with the religion of the Bishops, taken, I mean, as a whole,—as their doctrine is corrected by their practice; and the Christianity of the wealthier clergy I thought very gentlemanlike; but as for that of the gospel and the Apostles, I could only count it among the miracles, as a thing to be adored rather than imitated, to be reverenced like the ark, not unto the laying of hands upon it, but at a respectful distance; seeing that it appertains not to our lowliness to trespass on the heavenly perfections, especially as our clergy, who study these things so deeply, have spent their whole zeal upon the study, and give us not the warrant of their example to practise them.

For all this I can plead ignorance in my excuse; my experience had yet to teach me that we seek vainly here on earth for any other satisfaction when we have rejected the only true one,—that of religion; and so, being in this darkness, I was as loath to be torn from my lusts and vanities as ever a true Christian could be from his faith and hope and the fulness of his heavenly assurances. If I were to be happy, it should only be on my own terms, and after my own fashion; as for my more zealous counsellors, why should I listen to them only to be persuaded into disquietude? I could have cried out to them, with the Argive,—

“*Pol me occidistis amici,
Non servastis sit, cui sic extorta voluptas,
Et demtus per vim mentis gratissimus error.*”

In short, I carried the doctrine of supererogation beyond its utmost Papistical limits. In my articles of faith, “a little more than a little was by much too much.” Scantiness I held better than excess, short-falls of easier remedy than overthrows.

To conclude all, I flattered my supineness with the notion that Christianity was strong enough to work its own

way, and should be left to do so ; that it could be nothing else than mischief to darken knowledge with words, to interfere with higher counsels than our own ; that every man should keep his religion in his soul, lest its purity should be sullied by the use of worldly communications ; that he should make a secret of it, and keep his secret most religiously.

Hence it was that I hated the zeal that is instant in season and out of season ; that fans the faint embers, and suffers not him that slumbers, but calls him up to disquiet him. I was no divine, but yet there was one particular class of people that stirred up my bile to the quality of the true “theological hatred,” — I mean the peripatetic pietists, the “*piétons*” of a double sense, the frequenters of widows’ houses, makers of prayers, whisperers of spiritual comfort into the ear of privacy. I watched all their moves, I regarded their comings and their goings as jealously as does the substantial country dealer the movements of his hawking rival. Why could not people serve themselves at the regular shop ? Are not the church-doors wide enough for all comers ? Over-cheap sold, is not over-honestly come by. Depend upon it they are smuggled goods ; look if they have the custom-house stamp upon them. It is a scandal, a crying shame ; such interlopers are the ruin of the fair dealer. This was about the general tone of my feeling, I will not call it my opinion, on this “great argument.” It was no especial fault of my disposition ; in the nature of things it could hardly have been otherwise. I was not so happy as to be born or brought up in a family of any extraordinary piety. In course of time I had got a few general notions about religion, just as I had about other abstract virtues ; but it was never in privity with me, I took it not to heart, I was a mere customary Christian. Here, too, at school, I was thrown in, for many years together, among five

hundred boys who thought quite as little about it as myself. Indeed, during the whole time that I was there, I never knew a schoolfellow, and I would almost dare to say that I never had one, addicted to Christ ; impressed with the sacred seal ; penetrated with a full, and lively, and deep, and prevailing sense of his duties towards his Creator. I am sorry to say it, — I regret that offence must come, — but true it is that we were thought sufficiently trained, if we were trained to scholarship ; or, I should say, not to it, but in the way of it ; as to religion, we were left to get it as we could, — to glean it, if we were so disposed, here and there in the open fields, as occasion presented itself, instead of preparing the soil duly and of set purpose, and sowing the seed, and so in the end reaping our harvest on our own account, and filling our bosoms with the abundance of it. It was presumed, I suppose, that in that way we were no worse off than our neighbours, or the most of them ; that we had as fair a chance for it as they ; that, however it might be, the world would contrive to work its way ; and that, in spite of all things, we might reasonably hope to leave it as good, or thereabouts, as we had found it. And so the conscience stands excused. Well, the excuse is an easy one. Heaven grant that it may be as efficacious as it is easy ! at all events, it will serve us very well as a colorable plea ; the only question is, how it is to avail us against the enemy, when we are to stand for our last judgment.

I am pretty sure that in my time there was no such boy as I have mentioned in our whole city, — no, not one. He would have shown as “ the snowy dove among the crows ” ; not indeed trooping with them, but infested by them, and persecuted by them, — vexed with all adversity. Our chapel-goings were frequent ; there we appeared, and were offered up bodily ; but our hearts,

nd souls, and feelings were seldom of the congregation. Our governors, I suppose, thought that it was with religious sentiments as sportsmen tell us that it is with hares, — if there be only a form it is enough ; the living thing is sure to come shortly, and occupy and possess it. As for me, I am incredulous.

It is clear from all this, that my share of the great prerogative of mankind, the privilege of religion, amounted to very little. Habit, example, and communication were ill against me. I should say, before I go further, that in this respect a great change has taken place at Eton within a few years. Recently it has become regenerate. A new life, a very soul, has been breathed into the system. Religion has been vindicated to its rights. It is at length a Christian school, and a school of Christianity.

I felt most deplorably this absence of all true religious feeling. Its effect was simply this, — I was adrift on the main sea, without either compass or rudder. The lights of heaven, that might have guided me, the stars shining out of darkness, shone for me, it is true ; but vainly, and confusedly, and unintelligibly. I had no fixed central power to keep me in my orbit, and to restrain me from my wanderings, — no leading principle, — no such chosen object and regulator of my life as the Greeks called, most significantly, *προαιρεσις*. I was not aware of the remedy, but I had long felt the pressure of the disease. I had often tried to throw my mind, my moral and intellectual life, into a determinate channel, that so it might speed on in a wholesome, and pure, and joyous stream, instead of evaporating in fogs, or wasting to black mud. For this end I had put divers expedients in practice. One after another I had taken up politics, and mathematics, and French literature, and composition, and other such implements, — I use the word as it may seem, *pedantically*, but I believe justly. I gave them

each its trial, and I found that they all answered their purpose for a time, but the profit of them was chiefly in the pursuit ; when I had gained my object, then I turned my back upon it, and altogether abandoned it. I should except the matter of politics, — that single vein ran, it is true, through my whole mass, and drained it, although but partially, of some ill humors ; but I felt all over me and through my entire being that something more was wanted ; and this same want, had I continued to feel it, I should have been to this day one of the malcontents, — a member of the self-dissatisfied mob, — repiners against Providence, — declaimers against the weariness of life, — the dust, and drought, and disgustfulness of their earthly pilgrimage. But I supplied the want. And so I became a man worthy, and willing, and able to stand before his Maker.

This advantage of religion, its great worldly advantage, has not, I think, been commended to the height of its deserts. We are accustomed to regard it as a refuge in distress, a haven in bad weather, a relief, and but an occasional one, from the dead level of our ordinary life, a cordial against the fainting fit. But it deserves to be more than this, very greatly more. We should make it not so much the practice as the habit of our lives. We should not say, I will go and do this or that religious act ; but we should so frame ourselves as to be led along in spirit through a perpetual series of such acts insensibly, and without consciousness of the effort, instead of being impelled to them *à prises et reprises*, by the freaks of caprice, the suggestions of mere officiousness. We should do as people devoted to its service, and not as hirelings for the job. We should make it the prevalent, pervading virtue of our souls ; and, when once it is that, it then becomes a mighty engine of the mind, — an intellectual as well as moral regenerator.

It is indeed essential to the strength, the real refined strength, as well as to the purity and elevation of the mind. I never yet knew an irreligious man of high and powerful intellect. Infidels, indeed, I have known, and known them as such, — infidels, I mean, in our sense, — but then they were always religious in their way ; devout deists ; worshippers after the religion of nature ; penetrated to their inmost beings by the sentiment of Divinity, the consciousness of God's omnipotence, of his omnipresence, and of his infinite universal benevolence, and referring habitually to themselves all these his attributes. Such believers, as regards the advancement of their intellect, may be conceived to draw from their belief much of the same benefit as derives itself from the true Christian faith ; but certainly not all of it. No human invention or imagination can supply the especial grace of Christianity, the warmth of its hopes, the fulness of its assurances, the preciousness arising from its price, its earnestness, comfort, and entire confidence. Still, religious sincerity may do much, whatever be its scope ; but for the scoffer there is no hope. He has degraded himself from his humanity ; he became a mere intelligent ape when he flung away and trampled under foot his religious faith, the birthright of his reason, the bond of his communion with his Maker. Subtile he may still be, and swift, and insinuating, and of most venomous potency. But he must crawl, nevertheless, and eat dust all the days of his life ; he has no spirit of aspiration ; he has lost the expansive principle ; he can never rise upward.

It is possible that some few foreigners may make an exception to this rule, — men of intellectual eminence, and yet infidels. If it be so, it is only because the pest of infidelity is so prevalent abroad, that it becomes reconciled to itself. It lords it in the ascendant. It runs through the general tone of society ; it is well reputed.

and received, and therefore loses something of its slavish, serpent-like quality, — its enviousness, and hatred, and sneering devilry. People may grow up in a pestilent atmosphere till they become inured to it, and show its effects not by any outward signs of plague, but only by the default of vigorous health, the depravity of the natural juices, and early decrepitude. Such, metaphysically translated, is the existence, the mental existence, of the infidel, even in his most favored condition, in countries where he is at home.

It was from the translation of a German work — Sturm's Reflections — that my soul was first softened for the impress of religion. I cannot say that the feeling was altogether new to me ; I had, of course, often heard and read the discourses of our Saviour in the Gospels, and never without being moved deeply. They breathe every one of them the very spirit of divinity. They work powerfully alike upon the child and upon the philosopher. The scribes may do their utmost to perplex the truth under pretence of explaining it, to smother Christianity under a heap of what they dare to call divinity, but here, at least, here in the blessed fountain itself, is an antidote against skepticism, a refreshment for the withered heart, a new life for the faithful. Never were our Saviour's words without such affection for me ; but it lasted not long, — no longer than the tears that it would occasionally call forth in me. These sudden sparks of feeling require something close at hand, some proper materials to catch and kindle, else are they born but to perish, as were mine hitherto. But it chanced one day that I went into a friend's room to amuse a vacant half-hour on the eve of chapel. There was a volume of Sturm upon the table ; I opened it, began a subject, was interested in it, and went along with the author in full train. My time was running fast out, but my interest continued at its height,

and our chapel-prayers were almost over before I was aware that they should have begun. Of course, I was a defaulter, but my absence, by some strange accident, was unnoticed. This I took to be auspicious,—a sort of providential sanction of the book,—and I loved it the more accordingly. However, apart from any such superstition, it is a work that can well afford to be estimated on its own merits. There is much in it, unless my boyish judgment deluded me, of rich coloring, of elegant design, of wondrous exhibition after nature, and, above all, of earnest and communicative piety. Besides, it has not the common fault of devotional works, that of dwelling too much upon abstractions; nor, again, that of shocking our prejudices too bluntly, and so irritating vanity instead of mortifying it. For instance, most writers of this kind are at no pains to suppress their contempt of human learning generally, and principally of classical learning. This, I felt, amounted to a stultification of all my pains and labors; I had, indeed, done the same thing myself, but not, I presume, in sincerity; or, at least, I used my studies as an ill-conditioned husband uses his wife,—could bear to abuse them myself, but not to hear them abused by others. The vituperation stuck in my ears, and effectually precluded my acceptance of any thing else that might be offered by the same parties. But there was nothing of this in Sturm. He invites us to his communings as a saviour, instead of brandishing over our heads the sword of the conqueror and avenger, in the way of the Eastern superstition. Altogether, I was captivated with his book, and lived much in it. I read it, too, in the summer season, when nature seems to conspire with religion, and to disclose, with her gentle touch, the sources of all the affections that tend heavenward. As often as I went forth and looked out, in that noon tide of the year, upon the loveliness, and the abundance, and the

gorgeousness of nature, instead of dissolving, as it were, my soul in the warmth of that delicious atmosphere, and revelling in the day-dreams of a mere sensual poetry,— instead of resigning, as hitherto, my whole faculty to lie in lengthened indolence upon the lap of summer luxury, I began now to rise to the contemplation of God from that of his works ; to see in every thing around me, in all those glorious phenomena, the express handwriting, the very character, of the Almighty, his authentic signature to his creation. Thus was I raised and expanded and glorified in spirit. It is true that this is not the real religion, — scarcely even a type of it, or at best a very obscure and shadowy one, — but my heart was won over from its hardness, and made contrite, and penetrated with heavenly influences. It is only on that soil, on the heart renewed and quickened, that the good seed can be sown with good hope and promise ; and thus, though I was as far as ever from the doctrine, I was brought near, at least, to the sentiment of religion.

CHAPTER X.

“ O reader, had you in your mind
The stores that silent thought can bring,
O gentle reader, you would find
A soul in every thing.” — WORDSWORTH.

THESE, then, were what the poet would call “ blest conditions,” — blest according to the measure of their extent, though short of full blessedness. Indeed, I have sometimes thought that it would be well if we considered every child as God has considered the human race ; if we taught him and suffered him to grow up awhile amid the

thoughts and influences of natural religion, and so prepared his heart, and mellowed, as the dyers say, his whole being for the glorious final tincture, — the baptism to regeneration, — the mysteries of the revealed faith. As it is, as education now plods on in its customary task-work, the boy is too apt to become a scoffer, or, at best, a careless and a mere nominal Christian, because he is required to receive the spirit before his affections have been hallowed for its reception ; he is introduced into the holy of holies ere his soul has been long enough conversant in the outer court, — the place of preparation, — the religion of the gentiles. I have often heard and observed the language of boys on these most holy subjects, and the method of their minds upon them. They have a short but quick sight ; they catch at a verbal contradiction, and disregard the truth involved in it ; they busy themselves about the husk, handling, twisting, and torturing it, but they refuse the kernel. In short, I never yet knew a boy who was the better Christian for so very early an initiation into mysteries ; and I have known many who have become carpers and cavillers, and probably, therefore, skeptics in after life, only from their early indoctrination, and from the habit implied in it, and in the boy necessarily implied, of looking only to points, instead of regarding the system as a grand whole, of regarding it, that is, in a view utterly beyond their scope of vision.

At that time, unfortunately, I was no great venerator of the Sabbath ; or, at all events, my veneration was of the very darkest and most dismal hue, untempered with a single gleam of love or joyousness. There was no re-creation for me in its rest ; only an unquiet yawningness, a sickness of heart and stomach, a faintness of all my faculties, as though my veins were running with ditch-water ; *an itching propensity to be at something, without*

the power to gratify it. I was not singular in my antipathy. The whole herd of us, great and small, learned and unlearned, were parties to it. We were utter anti-sabbatists ; gladly would we have repudiated the property of the long day so heavily bestowed upon us. Of all the painful inflictions of boyhood, I know hardly any worse than that of wading through the slough of Sunday. To me it was a dead oppression,—a sort of journalized nightmare ; I felt in mind as I should have done in body had I been kept to a standing posture without support, or, as old Brown expresses it, to a continuance of enforced station, through the livelong day. Surely it is a serious mistake to pretend to make the Sabbath sacred by making the man idle,—to relieve the labors of the week by the most racking of all exhaustions, the exhaustion of listlessness. To set apart one day as consecrate to the Lord, and give that very day over to the devil, to sow in it his tares among the fruit of the week's industry ; to propose to a set of boys, and to men equally destitute of all good resources, the alternative of indolence or mischievousness,—can it be that God is thus glorified, or religion honored, or our Saviour commended to our love ? But religion must have its rights ; ay, I say, Amen ! its own rights, and our affections into the bargain, in full and overflowing measure. Let it have the duty of our devotion, but, when that is satisfied, let it also have the gratitude of our gladness. Multiply, if you will, your preachers, magnify your churches, do every thing, as rulers are bound to do, for the growth of grace, and the union of all hearts in true religion ; but then, when this is done, let the heart express itself ; let nature have its course. Let the morn be ushered in and celebrated with all solemnity, but let gayety and open gamesomeness, rather than secret debauchery, have their share in the after-day. *So much for children, and the same rule is a reasonable*

one for the poor man, — the daily laborer ; as for his rich neighbour, he needs no recreation, but rather the contrast of earnest exercise as a relief to his week's idleness. Let that earnest exercise be the exercise of his soul ; let it be bestowed upon his Maker ; let it go up continually to God in the strivings of aspirant faith, the fervors of devotion. For him, indeed, it may be that the whole Sabbath's space is no more than just sufficient for the acknowledgment of God's grace, and the redemption of his evil days ; and, besides, as he has leisure, so, also, he should have learning. His books, his meditations, should have supplied the sources of his devotion, and enabled it to cheer what would otherwise have been a barren waste by its continual course, by the freshening liveliness of its stream ; whereas the ideas of the uneducated man are few, his attention feeble, the compass of his mind narrow, his judgment unpractised and uncertain ; consequently his root is but seldom deep, his faculty of devotion is speedily exhausted. And so of the raw schoolboy. Task him not beyond his strength ; when he has satisfied God's service, suffer him, in such sports as he likes best, to fulfil the season of his amusement, lest you cloud his Sabbath to dismalness, and make prayer itself hateful to him.

At last, after long years of sufferance, I was delivered from my bondage. A young friend who left the school soon afterwards gave me a little book, made up of extracts from Paley. If I had asked him to give me half his fortune instead, I think it not improbable that he would have refused me. But yet, as it was, he had given me, I believe in my conscience, what was much more valuable to me. One day, just as I had returned from church, and was sitting alone under my usual Sunday cloud, it occurred to me, for I was never without a certain sense of religious propriety, that this would be a

good book to read. I opened it, and read a few pages with enough of interest to keep my attention alive. At last I struck upon a passage, that, like the trap-door in the Arabian Nights, opened a treasure to my enjoyment. It was the recommendation of Paley, given in more expressive language than now occurs to me, that we should get the habit of filling up our leisure time, our hours of idleness, by the contemplation of God in his works,—in his works, and through them, and by them. The thought struck me instantly; I saw that it was good; it was one of those ideas which the soul recognizes at once, by a kind of familiar sympathy, as being of its kindred. I got up from my chair in a sort of surprise, as one that has just received intelligence of hope or pleasure from a sudden messenger. I paused not long upon the prospect. I took my hat, and went out upon the impulse, determined not to lose a moment of the promised happiness from default of making trial. One would hardly think that the impression on a boy of seventeen should have been so deep and so immediate, but such it was. The *mollia tempora* must have been prevalent with me,—the mood of feeling and susceptibility. I went out, and found, to my surprise, that, by virtue of my new talisman, I saw with other eyes, and felt with other feelings than I had been used to do. The veil had fallen from before my sight. I stood in immediate presence before the Lord and all his works. Every thing had a meaning for me; from every object that met my eyes there seemed to go forth a voice, to breathe a spirit of holiness. I followed my first step. I resigned myself to the imagination; and still as I dwelt upon it would it develop itself more and more vividly, till my soul was enlarged within me, swollen into the fulness of space, blended with immensity. I was penetrated with sympathy. Objects that I had never before noticed, soulless and insensible

things, as I should then have deemed them, on a sudden to my apprehension were instinct with a new life, pregnant with a holy significance. I found sermons in the very stones, and good in every thing. From the tiniest leaf upon the tree, the grass under my feet, the waving corn, and sheep, and cattle, to the bright beaming atmosphere, the sun, the firmament above my head, all things animate and inanimate seemed to claim communion with me, to be partakers of the same glorious Godhead, to be vital, like myself, with the individual spirit, — the soul of the universe. The *Te Deum laudamus*, the song of conspiring praise, was sent up from the chorus of all creation. I appeared to know myself out of darkness and the thick cloud, to feel for the first time that I was at home in the universe.

I came home delighted with myself and my discovery, and all that it had disclosed to me. I had found a new element of life, — one purer, and warmer, and more ethereal than all the others. But I was somewhat diffident of myself. Not over-prone to draw very largely upon the fund of my recent fortune, I was afraid, as in former cases, of handling what I fancied might possibly prove a bubble ; my estimate of my treasure was so high, that I feared lest my very anxiety about it should bring about a failure in “the hour of act,” and then my recollection would be spoiled ; it was safer, I imagined, not to wear my new habit in ordinary, but to lay it up in my memory, while all its gloss was yet upon it, and bring it out once in a while upon occasions.

However, I repeated the experiment from time to time ; not always with the same success, for that of course would depend mainly upon my disposition of the moment, and I was then as raw and uncertain as my years, but always, on the whole, with profit. A change came over my whole spirit ; not an instantaneous one, for I did not

baptize myself at once so fully as I ought to have done in this water of regeneration, but a perceptible and thorough, though a gradual one. My Sundays especially presented themselves to me in a wholly different aspect. They were no longer clad in mourning, — dark, dismal, and lugubrious ; on the contrary, I welcomed them as the bridegroom does his bridal morning. As soon as chapel was over I used to give myself up to my meditations, and return, after an hour or two's stroll, wiser, and better, and happier than I went forth.

But what most surprised me was this, I found not merely my religious feeling, but, moreover, my intellect, strengthened and heightened inexpressibly by these my contemplations. Of this I had no forethought. As for piety, it was a thing that I had never cultivated. It might come if it would, and fall where it list, like the dew of heaven ; but, for myself, I was at no pains to make a study of it. In this, if I had believed myself to need any apology, I should have taken shelter under the cloak of authority and example. We were bad scholars the most of us, but yet much better scholars than devotees. The ambition of the schoolboy will hardly descend to fly at such low game as the moral virtues. I knew what was in price among us. I had observed that certain of my schoolfellows were caressed, and distinguished, and pointed out to us for our patterns, not because they were high-minded as regarding their worldly interests, and humble-minded as regarding themselves, and good, and kind, and faithful ; but because they were conversant with Porson's canons, and were clever at versification, and were supposed to have some taste of the genuine classic fountain. I saw this, and noted it thereupon, and carried my talents, such as they were, to the best reputed market. In the mean time I had not the smallest idea that I was *building upon no foundation, or upon one of mere sand* ;

that genius, so long as it stands by itself, however keen and brilliant it may be, is but a mere edge, useless for good purposes, and apt only to cut the fingers of its master ; if we would make a serviceable tool of it, we must back it with a weight of substantial metal, of sterling morality ; it is only so that we can give it steadiness and power, that we can drive it well home. I was not conscious of all this. I knew indeed my infirmities, and had long felt them most bitterly, but I had never the least notion of their remedy. Here it was at my disposal. I was not, indeed, in the rank of geniuses, and my ambition to reach that rank had been fruitful of nothing but repulses and mortifications. Still I was a great gainer by my discovery ; in mind as well as soul altogether another being.

The truth is, that the greater number by far of our failures and discomfitures in life, small and great, galling, nettling, or crushing, arise from our want of confidence ; not the superficial confidence of the coxcomb, who is clear only because he is shallow, and for the same reason is babbling perpetually ; but deep, deliberate confidence, — the confidence that is above its work, and therefore master of it. I began to feel just now “a touch of this quality.” My devotional aspirations, my communion with the Creator, had raised me to no common pitch ; I was higher than the worldly level ; I could take a wider, and clearer, and truer survey of what was under me, than when I was jostling about among my fellows. As I rose, so also I lost sight of those little, low, irritating annoyances, the pin and needle points strewn about so thickly in the highway of life, and so distracting and harassing to its wayfarers. Already I was wellnigh superior to them ; they concerned me but little. Here was an inestimable advantage for me in respect of mental improvement. *In my younger days I had been captious and pas-*

sionate, jealous, resentful, and capricious ; all this from the excess of my sensibility, and the want of any regular determinate issue for it. This was now provided ; my waters no longer ran to waste ; my evil humors were corrected and purified by being thrown into a proper course. I became comparatively calm and considerate ; I regarded the things about me less, and the things above me much more ; consequently, as my passions declined, my judgment waxed daily. Indifference and skilfulness are as natural allies in the offices of life as they are in the forms of our law commissions. It is a true proverb, “He who despises the world is master of it.”

I do not mean to say that religious feeling is necessary, absolutely necessary, for the attainment of eminence. I know that there are very many examples to the contrary. In times of heat and boiling contention, the refuse, the veriest dregs, if they have only buoyancy enough, are often borne up, and swim like scum upon the surface. In short, one may be a great man, according to the vulgar estimate of greatness, without the slightest sense of religion ; but it would be scarcely possible in that case, I do not say to achieve great things, but to live a great life. I admit, however, that even this is just possible ; as it is possible for a man to be a drunkard, and yet live out a century ; or to get a single great prize in a lottery ; or to live a life of reckless prodigality and yet die rich : in fact, from the very nature of probability, its highest possible terms must always be liable to be overruled by the result ; but still, as in the case of the drunkard and the spendthrift, though the one may live long and the other die rich, we may conclude, nevertheless, that those predicaments of their life would have been greatly enhanced if they had been sober and thrifty men ; so it is true of irreligion, that, though it may leave a man much of his *steadiness, and determination, and general capacity*, yet it

certainly takes much away, or at least precludes the addition of much more. For my own part, if a father were to come and tell me that it was his wish to bring his son up to this or that business or profession, no matter what it might be,— always excepting soldiership, for, where our nature is once degraded to brute violence, there is an end of all reason, or, at all events, of all reasoning upon it,— but for any other profession, if I were consulted as to the best method of preparation for it, it is not industry that I should recommend, nor fortitude, nor energy, nor regularity,— no ; none of these,— but religious feeling, which involves them all, and would be sure to evolve them in its progress.

Steadiness, in fact, is the main requisite for success ; and this religious feeling is the only assurance that we can have of confirmed steadiness. The latter, it is true, may exist without it ; but then it can exist only in dependence upon the humor of the individual. It is only while we put our reliance upon our God that we can walk surely, and steadfastly, and straightly ; it is only by such aid that our spirit can rise above the mist, and clear itself from the passions and anxieties of our nature, with all the hindrances to worldly, as well as to intellectual success, directly derived from them.

So much for negative infidelity; in other words, for the absence of all vital faith. This, I have endeavoured to show, is a grievous default,— a most dismal void, as all who have escaped from it will bear testimony. But this is a mere privation ; whereas the other evil, that of positive infidelity, is worse than the negative one, in the same way and the same degree as viciousness is worse than idleness, pain than indolence, anxiety than indifference. No man will doubt, that, of all worldly habits, the habit of gambling is the most adverse to intellectual advancement, *the most ruinous to intellectual health.* The

irritation, the fretfulness and fever, the perpetual boiling agitation occasioned by it, make it impossible for the mind to retain, or even to receive, any certain character and impression. But the spirit of gambling and that of skepticism are very nearly akin. The essence of both is the disposition to set our property upon hazards ; hence the evil passions that I have just described as arising from the perpetual agitation of the mind, among so many fatal changes and chances, are common to each of them. But skepticism is a foolish gamester,— a pigeon that has gone over to “troop with crows,” but still remains a pigeon. It does not understand its game,— it has never calculated the chances. The gambler is the wiser of the two ; he has, at least, a hope of winning. The more chances may be against him, but some, undoubtedly, are in his favor. The skeptic, on the contrary, stands to lose every thing, and can win nothing, let the event come off as it may.

“ He plays with sterling coin against flash paper.”

He puts out on hazard, and with very little chance of redemption, a happiness more valuable to him, if he only knew its worth, than all the world beside ; and what is the utmost that he can gain ? The satisfaction of taking to his heart the sneers and sarcasms of infidelity, with all its accompanying tempers, in exchange for his hope, his comfort, and his assured happiness.

I grew up in this devotional practice, but with all its advantages I fell short. I was yet greatly below the standard of Christianity. My devotion existed in the abstract,— it was mere natural religion,— a feeling rather than a faith. But, whatever it might be, I thank Heaven that it was vouchsafed to me. It did me much good, and at a critical season. I was at the age when the world, with all its wide-spread vanities, was just opening upon me. I knew it, in some degree, by anticipation ; I had

the prospects of its paths, though as yet I could not be said ever to have walked in them. But I was aware of the tempers and qualities of those about me,—of my competitors in my future race; and I was beginning, even then, by the mere force of imitation, to frame myself to their model; to renounce the spirit and embrace the vanities of the world; to abjure the divinity within me, and addict myself to the depravity of my nature. The feeling of devotion, irregular as it was, came just in time to counteract this base tendency, and throw me into another course; otherwise I had been lost. I must have grown into the dry, dusty, plodding callousness of those who pursue the pilgrimage of life along its ordinary high-road.

I have before stated my conviction that all true greatness of mind depends upon the culture of the affections,—their nurture, their exercise, and their development. Primarily and naturally this development, or the first yearnings of it, are shown in the bosom of our families. But this is an imperfect and generally an ineffective discipline. It is not always in the contact of friendliness and with their smooth sides, but rather with their points and angles, that the members of a family come together. Parents may be unkind, children ungrateful, wives and husbands perverse; brotherhood is but too frequently hatred in disguise; selfishness and suspicion are rife everywhere; and where we look for comfort, there often is desolation. In that case, whither shall we have recourse?—where can we take refuge? Where else but in devotion; in that faithful home of our affections,—that one precious treasure,—that unfailing source? There at length we are at rest. There, and there only, the mind can take its stand, surely and steadfastly; with that purchase it may operate at its will upon all objects around it. *Independently of it, it is true, the mind may be a*

thing of exquisite texture, of fine material, of rich coloring and fancy, of most cunning composition, but it can be no more ; as it was first formed, so must it remain ; it can never rise ; it must lie grovelling on the ground, unable to support itself by any inward virtue. The spirit of devotion only, the soul that is breathed into it, can swell it into buoyancy, expand it to the full beauty of its proportions, and speed it on its upward flight, its heavenly aspirations. Thus, and thus only, can it fulfil its destinies.

But, though I feel to this day the angelic influence of the devotion then entertained by me, I cannot commend it absolutely. It was of too epicurean a quality. It served admirably well to warm, and soften, and spiritualize my mind, to prepare it for the seed of Christianity ; but further than this it lacked efficacy. It was unproductive itself, though the cause of productiveness in other things. I might have been imbued with it to the heart's core, and yet a very heathen. It had no power to develope the sterner and more trying and peculiarly Christian virtues. It had a tendency to make me compassionate, and kind, and gentle, and disinterested, and generous, rather than niggardly ; these are fine qualities, but they are compatible with others of less worth, and indeed rather akin to them. For instance, with all this I might have been luxurious in my daily diet, — a prodigal, — a libertine, — an irregular, dreaming idler. There was nothing in the devotion that I practised at all counteractive of these mischiefs ; nay, more, it might have served to encourage them. The seal of Christianity was wanting to set a stamp upon my character ; to give me a real practical value, — a sterling currency. Had I continued as I then was, — a lover of God and all his works, a studier and adorer of nature, a warm, enthusiastic, self-sufficing votary, — I should probably have been an ami-

able man, but, more probably still, a mere cipher in the world ; a man of no imaginable use among my fellows. I walked in these ways for a season happily and profitably, but, if I had never gone beyond them, I must have been lost in them infallibly. I had the proof of this in the sequel.

In fact, even as it was, I believe that I indulged myself something too much in this habit. In consequence of it I fell into a kind of acquiescence, or rather, that I may not palliate a bad quality with a good name, into sheer indolence. I confirmed myself in my love of solitude, and I began already to feel the insidious approaches of its usual offspring, — aversion to every thing like business and active proficiency. I needed not the uses and appliances of society. I was content to contemplate the glories of the creation ; I delighted in the bounty, the prodigality, of nature, and it never occurred to me that, if I had blessings to receive, I had also duties to discharge, and that it was only by the fulfilment of these last that I could entitle myself to the former. I let the vein flow, and troubled myself but little with any such compunctionous visitings. Had I been ten years older, and suffered such a habit to grow upon me, it must have been my ruin. It is easy enough for any man to go along with the stream of life singly and at his pleasure, but where we have to cross it, or to encounter it, it is only in company and by coöperation that we can advance against the force of so many adverse and transverse currents. I have read in some French author, who spoke his own experience, “*À Paris on ne vient à bout de rien quand on y vit isolé*” ; and it is true not in Paris only, but all the world over.

This spirit of acquiescence diffused itself throughout me, and at a time, too, when activity should have been the soul of my existence. For one among many other

results, I became a spendthrift of my time ; I blotted the morning from my day ; I was bedridden in the worst sense, — the sense of laziness. To no deadlier enemy of my advancement could I possibly have surrendered myself. It avails nothing to multiply testimonies of the truth, — experience is unanimous, — the difficulty is not in faith but practice ; it would be hard to find a single man who ever made himself great, and was not an early riser. As for myself, after long years of reluctance, I have not even yet disenthralled myself from this silken captivity. I know no greater height of heroism, no more transcendent virtue, than to spring up from my bed at the moment of my first waking. This is easy enough for people habituated to it ; but how to acquire the habit, there is the masterwork. I have tried all ways and means, I have made a hundred experiments, but no one of them can I commend with any certainty of commendation. My practice goes generally by courses ; a single victory is the presage, and indeed the cause, of many more. One unlucky succumbence to idleness turns the tide at once, and forces my determinate current back again upon its fountain. Habit, then, is every thing, — the first step is the prompter of the second, — all is easy to perseverance. And now, as to the best method of perseverance, I will adventure a few hints.

In the first place; in this, as in all other virtuous resolves, to act upon the first impulse is the only policy. It is said of women, and of garrison commanders, that if they pause upon the proposition, if they suffer themselves to be brought to parley, they are surely lost. This is as true here. Listen not to the siren ; to commune with her is to struggle with one's mistress. Such a contest can end only in supineness, relaxation, and exhaustion. We should realize by act the words “awake, arise,” in *as quick, as immediate, a succession, as they were uttered*

by the poet. The man who springs from his bed, as the French say, "*en sursaut*," is the only conqueror; he shakes off the heaviness of his chain, the cloudy dulness of his slumber, the confusedness of his dreams, and so "Richard's himself again." The first touch of light is like that of Ithuriel's spear,—it strikes him, and he starts up at once in his proper likeness. And, O, the happiness of the vindication! It is then only that we quaff the first flowings into our cup; the briskness, the spirit, the sparkling liveliness of the young day; let it stand but for an hour or two, and it is already settled upon its lees,—it is become stale, flat, and vapid.

The early-rising man has the same conscious comfort through the day as the prudent, thrifty householder has through life; he is beforehand with the world, he has laid up something in advance, and that of no ordinary worth, but an inestimable thing, the most precious of all treasures,—Time. He takes the day by the forelock; he drives it, instead of being driven, or rather dragged along by it. Besides the dispositions of our earlier moments, our briskness or disgust, our dulness or our alacrity, impart themselves almost infallibly to the subsequent ones, and are wrought into the texture of the day. Like generates like, one minute is begotten of another, the beginning is auspicious of the end. I will say no more,—truth is short, and words are endless; only I must regret that this great virtue and instrument of happiness has been neglected, like all others, simply (simply indeed, and very foolishly) because we know or fancy that it is in our power at any moment.

For my whole life through, this difficulty of early rising has been a quicksand in my course, sometimes dissipated, again accumulated in all its danger, disappearing and reappearing from time to time. Often have I been aground upon it, more than once I have been in danger

crossed him in the very magic circle, of the sorceress ; to command the whole host of temptations, and bid them all defiance — to breathe the own proper atmosphere of gamblers, scamps, and swindlers, and yet hope to wend his way along quite scatheless of the infection ; to throw away all guidance, where it was certain on the instant to be wanted — and that by many a dauntless Amazon, who durst not shrink to clamber the crest of every antagonist, to rebuke the progress, and abate even unto droopingness — yet such and such a one can never be set in rest against her ; this was indeed a daringfeat, a most presumptuous confidence. But my wildness would have its way. By all the art of seduction and perseverance, I got the consent of my parents. — a consent, I must needs own, implying no assurance greater of their affection than of their judgment. And so I set out one fine summer's day with my discretion for my Mentor. This was but a blind guide, a sort of will-o'-the-wisp authority. The wonder is, that it did not lead me into the very slough of debauchery, and there leave me lost and sunk irretrievably ; but good fortune for once supplied the offices of good guidance ; my way was beset with dangers ; divers of them I encountered, and came off but haltingly from the contest, — but once in the "mistress city" — O, how significantly is she named ! — and I rested there in safety.

"Via prima statim,

Quod nescire res, Grauit passum ab utro."

The course of my expedition was typified to me at my voyage. We were crossed and huddled over in our galleys, like the waves of the ocean, — the eye all joy.

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an ancient soldier, a "*brave homme*," in the social sense of the word, and I doubt not in the military one also. Unluckily, his worth was his only wealth, and therefore, poor man, he was content, ay, and right glad too, to take me as a lodger. However, though somewhat reduced, he was yet nowise decayed. His household was in as good order, and as well provided, as any garrison that he ever served in ; and, with all its other comforts, there was one more and better than all,— a pretty girl of twenty, niece of my hostess, thereto appurtenant. Hitherto I had seen but very little of female society,— little of its good, and nothing at all of its evil lineaments. My heart was a virgin soil ; it showed a good promise of return, whatever seed might be flung into it. I was only seventeen, and in voice, manners, and appearance I was even younger than my years. Man is a plant that ripens earlier in France than under our foggy influences ; in the Parisian hot-bed, above all, he is a thing most precocious. No wonder, then, that in the eyes of a lively Frenchwoman, older than myself in years, and in maturity advanced immeasurably beyond me, I appeared as a mere stripling, a piece of raw material ; and so indeed I was, but it was the rawness of fashionment rather than that of substance,— inexperience rather than ignorance. To be short, I was much wiser than she was aware of.

My host and hostess were kind, good, amiable, and benevolent people. They had no relations of high rank, nor yet of moderate wealth, but they had with such comforts as they could desire. They were not little in the world, though they did not stand high. They were gayety and talkative persons, and delighted more in home but in society. They took great pleasure to them, a walk or a drive, or a turn for the exercise of their limbs. Persons so disposed, and who had time to do so, On the whole, then,

express limits, the very magic circle, of the sorceress ; to confront the whole host of temptations, and bid them all defiance ; to breathe the own proper atmosphere of gamblers, sharps, and swindlers, and yet hope to wend his way home again scatheless of the infection ; to throw down his gauntlet, where it was certain on the instant to be taken up, and that by many a dauntless Amazon, who never yet failed to lower the crest of every antagonist, to exhaust his prowess, and abate even unto droopingness every spear that might be set in rest against her ; this was indeed a daring feat, a most presumptuous confidence. But my wilfulness would have its way. By dint of protestation and perseverance, I got the consent of my parents, — a consent, I must needs own, implying the assurance rather of their affection than of their judgment ; and so I set out one fine summer's day with my discretion for my Mentor. This was but a blind guide, a sort of will-o'-the-wisp authority. The wonder is, that it did not lead me into the very slough of debauchery, and there leave me lost and sunk irretrievably ; but good fortune for once supplied the offices of good guidance ; my way was beset with dangers ; divers of them I encountered, and came off but haltingly from the contest, — but once in the “mistress city” — O, how significantly is she named ! — and I rested there in safety.

“ Via prima salutis,
Quod minimè reris, Graia pandetur ab urbe.”

The course of my expedition was typified by that of my voyage. We were crossed and baffled out of patience in our navigation down the river, but when we got into the open sea, where I apprehended the danger, it was all plain sailing.

Happily, I was well commended there ; I got into the family — not merely into the house, but absolutely for a time into the family — of a fine old French gentleman,

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I was a favorite with them ; from the moment that I came, as they had little else to do, it seemed to be their only concern to provide for my amusement. But curiosity is a craving thing, boyhood is importunate, and years are a weary load. They were subject to their infirmities; their good-will and kindness of spirit hardly sufficed to carry them through days of sight-seeing ; still they seemed to think it was a thing that must be done, or that otherwise they should fail me in a point of duty. They essayed it once or twice, and then concluded, philosophically enough, that the exertions of their young lady to amuse me would be quite as agreeable to me as their own ; accordingly to her I was consigned,—she had the entire charge of me. In every thing,—walking, reading, seeing spectacles, and even play-going,—I was put under her direction. They regarded me as a mere boy ; they considered our companionship a matter of course, as much as if she had been my mother ; and, indeed, girls of twenty in France and England are very different beings. There they are framed earlier,—they are sooner out of their girlhood,—they are women in mind almost as soon as they are in person ; consequently, they have vastly more discretion, and are less liable to be thrown off their guard by any sudden impulse. As for us two, we were constantly together, and it has been said, on great authority, that two people so circumstanced cannot fail to fall in love with each other. This was not altogether our case ; but, nevertheless, my young patroness, I am quite sure, conceived a liking for me, and that not so much from any qualities of my own as by the force of nature and necessity. Such as I was at that time, a fashionable woman would have abhorred me,—she could never have endured me, to say the very least of it. I was strange, and, as the French express it, *sauvage*,—*pity we have no synonyme for the word, nothing in our*

dictionary comes near it. I was made up of points ; full of contrarieties ; but then in those contrarieties, in those very points, for a person who has leisure to examine them, to study and dwell upon them, there is something of piquancy. They excite a feeling of surprise, and surprise is akin to interest, and interest is the own sister of affection. My kind and condescending damsel took upon herself, in the first instance, to soothe the shyness of my spirit,— to reconcile me to the strangeness of the things about me,— to induce me, by the sunshine of her gentleness, to throw off the cloak of my reserve and walk openly. She spoke softly to me, and entreated me kindly, and would fain even have caressed me into complaisance. But this was a step too far ; it brought her to the very verge of imprudence, not to say impropriety,— I dislike the last word ; where there is nature and good feeling, I would fain hope that it can have no business. But she discovered that those sisterly caresses might chance upon a time to be met in no very brotherly spirit. Accordingly she took the alarm,—she started from her purpose,—

“ *Improvismus aspris veluti qui sentibus,*” &c.

For, indeed, in my nature, as in all persons of my age, there was a serpent-like, insinuating quality, which, when taken into the bosom of a female, cold and numb as it might before have seemed, is sure to raise its crest, and warm itself into designs of danger.

I repeat it, I am not vain enough to suppose that my fair damsel felt any vehemence of affection for me. I was very unlikely to transmit myself into the heart of any living lady. It is not to such uncouth striplings as I then was that the cunning little god is ever known to delegate his authority. But she played the game of love with me *just as she might* play any other game, merely

to amuse herself ; and so much the more readily as she was probably heart-whole, and would therefore flatter herself that the issue was in her own hands, that she could check any advances on my part, and force me upon my retreat at any moment. The fact was, that she had long been living there in retirement, and, as the poorest herb is welcome in the desert, she was not sorry to be able to play off her fireworks even on such a subject as myself. To women there is an inexpressible fascination in this dalliance with danger, — this compromise between love and coquetry. It is their one excitement, and it is worth to them all the thousand others that serve to relieve, or more often to distract, the dulness of their lords and masters. They are content to be whirled out of their own thoughts in that pleasing vortex. Its eddying rapidity is so delightful, — its attraction so gently powerful, — its surface, up to the very edge, so smooth and glassy ; all is charming till the last fatal plunge itself, when the abyss is opened to its victim and then closes upon her for ever.

But here there was no such danger. Our intercourse was that of friendship, stimulated to a certain degree by that instinct of opposite sex, which, albeit unconsciously, must always give a charm to the friendship of open and unartificial minds. There was a good deal of amusement in my character, and my companion availed herself of it all simply to divert her leisure ; moreover, she made it serve her as a kind of factitious experience, a practice of the points of fence, by way of lounging at a puppet. It was a strange medley of elements that went to my composition ; the extreme sensitiveness of my nature contrasted oddly with the features of shrewdness and worldly wisdom acquired by me during my discipline at a great school. Hence my sudden changes from shyness to audacity, from reserve to recklessness, from smoothness and cour-

teousness of demeanour to downright rudeness. This must always be the case in early youth, while the mind is made up of a heap of raw materials, such as must be tempered and run together by fusion before they can be wrought into sound metal and instruments of service. Till then they are apt to start upon the surface and give each other the change most capriciously. But there is an infinite and a very amusing variety of phenomena in this said fusing process. My young governess was puzzled to reconcile my utter ignorance on some points with the extent of my information on many others ; she could not comprehend me. She delighted in sharpening the edge of her wit upon my rude nature. Instead of comforting and caressing me, as heretofore, she took it into her head to tease me continually by all kinds of raillyery and sarcasm ; she stung me with nettles ; she scourged me into excitement, and that sort of excitement is as effectual a provocative of love as complacency itself.

However, I cannot say that I was absolutely in love ; my lady was too superior to me ; such superiority, when it takes endearment for its ally, when it courtesies graciously to its object, has all the powers of a spell, — it is irresistible ; but without that alliance it has something of a repelling quality ; our admiration tramples on the neck of our love. Love and lordliness, say the Italians, will none of each other's company ; and whether the lordliness be of state or of mind it matters not, the effect is almost identical. Besides, I was too lumbering to enter into the vein of my mistress's raillyery. The stings and nettles that I spoke of, had I been a few years older, they would only have added to my excitement, they would have stimulated my passion ; as it was, my sensitiveness shrunk from them ; it was only at times, in my gayer moods, that I could feel their incentive virtue.

In the mean time, possibly with a view to justify an act or two of familiar fondness wherewith she had been observed by her elders to indulge me in the infancy of my visit, she invariably spoke of me and treated me as a mere boy,—that is, in society, where she knew that her brilliancy was sure to dazzle me; otherwise, when alone, she was of a more submissive spirit towards me. Occasionally, as we went out together, the old gentleman would call to her,—“Mind you take good care of him,—be sure that you do n’t suffer him to fall in the way of the ladies from the Palais Royal.” Many such phrases, it should be observed, of questionable import in the ear of English delicacy, pass as so much current coin in the conversation of our neighbours. “O,” she would answer, off-hand, and with an easy, slighting air, “pray, then, my good uncle, be silent,” (the form of speech, by the by, is French, and not English,) “how can you put such notions into the head of a mere child like this?” These expressions put me on my mettle; my pride was piqued by them; I resolved, though without any wickedness of design, to try if I could not lower her from her high ground, to surprise her into the consciousness of my strength and her own weakness. But with such recitals the reader has no concern, neither has my subject, and so let them stand by.

Suffice it to say, that, whether or not I had the passion of love, I had at least the sentiment, and the one is of more value than the other a thousand times over for all purposes of improvement; and this sentiment sped through every vein, it animated me afresh, it made a new creature of me. I felt that a fresh source was open in me; I no longer recognized myself. For the first time, or nearly so, I was conscious of my virility. In such a warm, kindly climate, a consciousness like *this*, when once the instinct began to act, would expand

itself with amazing rapidity. My spirit grew with my self-importance. I was eager, on all occasions, to vindicate myself into manhood, —

“ For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk,— but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal.”

I began to take my character ; my voice, manner, and gait were improved from boyish vacillation into firmness and independence. I was as much altered by my new discipline as the ploughboy by that of his drill-sergeant. My good old friends were struck by the difference, and expressed their surprise at it. They insisted that I was native there, — a Parisian born ; they would have it that I must have been spirited away in my infancy, and that I was now, by a happy accident, brought back to breathe in my proper atmosphere, and renewed by it to my genuine French spirit.

But, to waive all this idleness, I am convinced that the sentiment of love is as propitious to the intellect as the mere sensual passion is degrading to it. In this sentiment there is a slight kind of excitement, a gentle stirring influence, a heavenly breath, such as used to be accepted in the old times as a happy augury, when it came down to inspire and enliven the flame upon the altar. One feels that one’s

“ Spirits are nimble ;
They fall together all as by consent.”

One’s confidence, too, is strengthened ; in fact, the very word confidence means, properly, the mutual trust of persons bound together in affection ; that was its first meaning, and it is still its truest and most forcibly significant one. Again, it is only thus that in our early boyhood we have any chance of being emancipated from our selfishness ; of delivery from that basest of all slaveries, the slavery

to our sordid selves and to our short-seen worldly interests ; such delivery is a birth into elevation of sentiment, itself the very life and soul of intellect ; provided always, and this is a most peremptory postulate, that the love here spoken of be the heavenly love, as the Greeks called it in their mythology, and not the vulgar one ; the spiritual, and not the carnal one ; the love of affection, and not of mere appetite ; such a love as Menander tells us is a better tutor than the best sophist that ever lived.

I left Paris, and the incidents that had befallen me there began gradually to lose their power ; they were sunk, as all such impressions must be, from the surface of my mind, but still, like a richly colored tincture thrown into a vessel of water, they had fallen from its surface to its depth, they had penetrated its whole volume ; it is true their influence, the tone of coloring that they gave, was less discernible, but it was not therefore the less real.

There are some lines in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, bearing for their burden the cankerworm of love, its choice of inhabitance in the finest wits of all, where, forsooth, it is wont to pull all to pieces, and make mad work in its own brave chamber ; its frowardness, its blasting quality, its desperate destructiveness, and many other distempered imaginations to the same purpose. Now this is rank treason against poetical sovereignty, — blasphemy against justice. And what then ? Why, the noxious member must be cut off, — the play, ay, the entire play, in all the integrity of its wickedness, delivered up to the executioner, stamped with the brand of forgery. I divorce it from my faith. Off with its head ! away with it ! And yet there are sweet flowers peeping out with most poetical eyes from that same chaplet, breathing so balmily, as it might almost persuade the headsman to *break his sword* ; exquisite souls, lovely images, glitter-

ing with the genuine dew, bathed in the streamy radiance of fancy, clothed in the very golden light, — the fairy cloth of gold ! And this being so, it pains me to pass sentence ; for how much of excellent imagination must I degrade from its heraldry ! how true a nobility must I deprive of its escutcheon, disauthorize it of its goodly fatherhood, and vilify it with a name of indifference ! But heart-rendings must needs be ; justice must have her due ; and in this, seeing that Shakspeare has denied himself, I do but echo the denial from his lips ; and this in no light thing, but in a primary article of his creed, — his love confessions, his most bounden homage and allegiance ; for who that hath not a hundred tongues bath utterance enough to fulfil the many passages — passages, no, abiding sweetesses, at least to my taste — where Shakspeare hath magnified the majesty, and extolled the spiritual efficacy of love, as highly as he — nay, rather his false traitor of a mimic — has here most vilely debased it ? But, to speak truth, affections are strong with me on both sides, — antagonists at each ear ; and who hath constituted me judge that I should decide this difference ? The cognizance is of Love's court, it is he that hath received the wrong ; let him avenge himself, as he is well able. He must be content to do the execution ; as for me, my hand abhors it, my heart revolts against it. Well, then, if he withhold himself, if he choose rather to let his honor go sleep in his indifference, the office must rest undone, the counterfeit must live, the Two Gentlemen must be left at large, to walk abroad and plume themselves in the false bravery of their sireship, and challenge the honor of their estimation, and likewise receive it.

When I went back to Eton, I returned to such a different manner of existence that I could hardly believe myself to be the same being. The oxygen was taken from *my atmosphere*, the *particula aurae* gone and van-

ished. I met my old associates, but I marked them not ; their greetings were as insipid to me as the cold, customary pressure of the brother's hand, after the parting kiss — parting at last, but, O, before that how long and promiscuously meeting, even to the extraction of all their honey — from the soft, sweet lips of the maiden mistress, the soul of one's self, the sister of that same brother. To leave a paradise, and be brought back again to the old round, a circle squared in its most dull exactitude to the satisfaction of the most skeptical geometer, the round of tasks, and attendances, and pastimes, for such only they were to me, — certainly not amusements ; where no heart was, no interest, no sympathy !

Misery is a thing of many aspects ; even parting misery is multiform ; a puppy left alone by its mother is doomed by the necessity of its nature to discomfort ; a schoolboy when he turns from his home, and weeps his eyes away into the very weakness of water, is a creature of forlornness and desolation ; a husband deserted by his wife may feel something of annoyance ; a creditor made orphan of his account, his showy configurations stultified, his hope made bankrupt by the limitary transgression of his scape-debt, is a lugubrious animal ; but no other wretch, save the lovelorn stripling only, has all these attributes of anguish, lugubriousness, and what not, cast upon him, and then, to crown all, distraction upon the heap of them, to prevent all reconciliation, to keep the elements from the very suspicion of amity. It is the lack of sympathy that distresses him ; if he have it not, he dies at heart, or at best lives but witheringly. This is not needed by a man of the world ; his business is his devotion, his gains are his loves, the fulness of his purse is that of his heart also ; but, where the beardless one has once been consentient of the said sympathy, he cannot support himself without it ; his heart fails him and is

flaccid ; it would be a mercy to drive a stake through him, and so fix him to a posture. It is true, all this concerned me not in the fulness of its acceptance. I was not very far gone in my love excursion. I had but a taste of the quality ; but even that one was father to the wish for another. My spirits had fallen into subsidence, their buoyancy deadened and depressed to the noxious quality of vapor ; I was sick of myself ; I could not with any patience return to my own vomit, or lay out upon my interest the faculties that I had made tributary to my affection ; I had become the diminutive of what I was, or rather of what I had just been. For the sentiment, though shrunk from its proportions, yet filled some space, — the spirit abode in me. The latter state of my mind was better than my former one, when as yet I had not known Love, — no, not even from his semblance.

This new inclination of my will pointed to a new world, and consequently my regrets at the idea of leaving Eton were somewhat softened. But they were not wholly subdued, — far from it, — shame upon me if they had. If gratitude be a virtue, I must have been a wretch indeed to have hardened myself at that time against its impressions. I owed Eton much ; she had ministered largely to my happiness, and wholly to my instruction. I had a heart within my bosom, and now that I was about to quit her for ever, to turn from the garden that was closed upon me, and walk out into the world, how should I not shed “some natural tears” at the moment of my departure. Truly, then, I behaved like a man. I sorrowed at my leaving Eton, as I had done of yore at my returning to it, though somewhat more soberly and sedate, — with a sorrow of dignity. I looked at the chubby little fellows, the host that was succeeding behind me, as it were to push me forward into life, and I contrasted the time *before them* with my own coming years, — an ob-

scure, uncongenial train, seen by me but dimly in my prospect. The *vales*, as we used to call them,—I must admonish my fair readers to make two syllables of the word,—the valedictory effusions, that is, of the *Musæ Etonenses*, with their similitudes of the sailor, the dying lamp, and the musically dying swan, were my only poetry; I read them and ruminated them, till they realized themselves in tears, and I wondered how it should be that their authors were not already known in the world as great poets.

There was reason enough in my regrets. If I were told of any man that he had left Eton without a heavy heart, I should augur but ill of him,—of his intellect, I mean, his tone of sentiment, and his general disposition. The place speaks so feelingly that the heart that does not respond to it at that season can be nothing but a lump of flesh, spiritually deaf and dumb, fit only to be fried and served up with a garniture of bacon,—and that the nobler portion of the dish. The very locality is as poetical, or, in English, as *creative* to the imagination, as a landscape of Iriarte, or an Italian scene of Turner. If outward imagery impress itself upon the mind, as it surely does, where have you, where, at least, in England, a nobler environment, an outline more magnificently filled, a scene where the young mind can better hope to feed itself to greatness on the contemplation of surrounding objects? For the College grounds themselves, the amplitude of space, the prodigality of wood and water, the varieties of light and shade, of openness and sequestration, all this, with the rushing of the “arrowy” Thames, and the aspect of the “ancient towers,” would consecrate the spot in the poet or painter’s memory. And then the commanding castle, not only of kingly magnificence, but itself an actual architectural king, enthroned upon his heights, crowned with his embattled diadem, and

wearing it on his brow most royally. Considering these things, I persuade myself that there is a Genius of the place, and that, as Cowper tells us, it would be idolatry with some excuse were we to do him reverence there.

And surely it cannot be said, as of the painted mask, that this so fair a face is without a spirit to animate it. That spirit has been at work through the whole body since it was first framed, and will yet, I trust, for long ages to come preserve its vitality. It is the spirit of classical composition ; a simple word, but spreading in its significance over a mighty space. Poetry, ethics, and history, — evangelical, though not polemical divinity, — all these are within its limits ; and, when these are exhausted, it will be time for our evil-wishers to cry out against the narrowness of our range. Greek and Latin are taught there, not as the dull and malevolent would have it, merely as learning, but mainly as the means of thinking ; as the interpreters and exponents of ideas in written composition. It is true, we do not busy ourselves about many minute things ; we are content to feed one channel fully, rather than to make a multitude, and then starve them by the scantiness of our supply ; to train up the trunk for a while in the singleness of its stature, that so it may grow to strength and vigor ere we encourage the offshoot of any collateral branches. But truth has no need of repetition. I say, then, at last, that no man will ever lament the deficiencies of Eton education who shall have made the most of its advantages.

CHAPTER X.

" Time on my brow hath set his seal ;
I start to find myself a man."

My period was now drawing to its close, and I was to go forth into the world. At that time my thoughts were so occupied by the prospect immediately before me,—my hopes, and fears, and anxieties for my future life crowded upon me so fast,—that I regarded my present self but little. I never thought of taking my actual measure; what I was to be in future was all that I considered. Now, however, at this distance, and with my acquired experience, I am enabled to make some estimate of the advantages that I was to carry into life with me; briefly, this is the sum of them. In the first place, I had lived feelingly. The issues of my heart had been kept running; my affections had been cultivated and cherished, partly from my circumstances, partly from my course of reading and general habits, and again, in some respects, from sheer accident. No one, unless this be true of him, can have any chance of arriving at largeness and elevation of mind, still less at amiability of disposition. But I was in the happy predicament, and consequently I had that chance; to what purpose I have availed myself of it is another matter. Here, then, was the first point made good. Again, I had laid up a considerable store of reminiscences on many subjects, or, to use the common phrase, of general information. In childhood, my books had been my chief amusement. I was allowed a free range, and therefore I took to my reading kindly. I was seasoned thoroughly to the taste. I felt an interest in almost every subject, and it is only this interest in things agreeable to us, and indulged to us withal, that can impart

to us in childhood the warmth and animation of spirit so needful to insure success in our studies of mere duty, — our daily taskwork. This general information, it may be said, is of no particular use ; but I deny the assertion. It diffuses a prevailing light about our path ; it is like the scintillation of the old mining-lamps ; each single spark, in itself, has no perceptible effect against the darkness, but, taken all together, they serve to illuminate, faintly, indeed, but yet perspicuously, the space about them. Such a light as this enables us to see our way, instead of being reduced to grope it ; to recur to reason wherever habit fails us ; to walk by judgment, and not only by landmarks.

Moreover, I was practised in composition ; I had been drilled for long years in that great redeeming discipline of my school. I had got a habitual power of thought, and that was the rudiment of my future rational one. I had made friendships, and enjoyed them ; I had felt the expansiveness of an affection warmer even than that of friendship working through my heart ; I had been an actor in many scenes, and those of a kind not always accessible to boyish experience ; I had observed the manners of many men ; already I knew something of the world.

Besides this, I was in possession of divers good principles, instruments of the intellect working most effectively in their way ; principles I call them, for, unfortunately, with me they could hardly be called habits ; I wore them but loosely and irregularly, nevertheless there they were in my mind, — the principles of reading, and speaking, and talking, and thinking effectually ; I had not as yet exercised them into development, but they were extant still, — not extinct, but in abeyance ; I could call them forth at any moment and put them upon their service, *as afterwards, by God's blessing, I did.*

Above all, I had acquired the treasure above price, the faculty and habit of devotion. The uses of this faculty, its influence upon the intellect as well as the heart, I have already endeavoured to set forth. I will say no more, for all that I could say must be short of the just proportion ; but thus much I would observe, that those who love not God are generally self-lovers, and to such, if not for any higher motive, yet for the satisfaction of their self-love, I do most heartily and most sincerely commend it. So shall they have their salt in themselves, they shall be seasoned to satisfaction ; the flatness, and staleness, and corruption of the world shall signify nothing to them.

So stands my account with Eton. Would there were more of reciprocity in it ; but on one side are figures beyond arithmetic, and I have nothing to set against them ; not for a doit am I her creditor. Such a thing is proportion ; nature and custom alike will both have it so ; mercies are measureless, and gratitude is but a scanty source. True, I have used occasion vilely, I have waived it like a beggar from before my gate ; but, if the harvest has been poor, the poverty was native to the soil, and stood not in the care and cost bestowed upon it. How then shall I requite thee, thou best of foster-mothers, fullest of the sincere milk, the milk of kindness and good nurture ? Worthily I cannot ; but wishfully that I will, in prayers, and hopes, and in all fervency of protestation. Thus, then, would I say unto thee :—Live and prosper ; may thy name be a blessing, and thy good name a rich jewel, a fair inheritance for thy children ; mayest thou be full with all abundance, and pour forth thy hundreds through every portal ; may princes frequent thee, and leaders of the people celebrate thee with their sons ; may the king's favor fall graciously upon thee, as the latter rain ; so shalt thou show as the ancient turreted

Cybele, overflowing with good gifts and graces, rejoicing in thy motherhood, honored in thy offspring, and seeing, whithersoever thou lookest abroad, thy labors exalted, thy children in high places ; may thy fields be ever green, thy ancient elms maintain themselves in their estate ; may thy river be true to his allegiance, ever in his course, kissing thy feet with all fondness and humility ; and thy entire memory, — nay, rather thy living glory, — may it be fresh, full, and poetical, as in the song of Gray ; more than this, may thy sons estimate thee duly, according to the measure of that which thou wouldest have meted to them, rather than that which they may have taken into their bosoms. Above all, as thy prosperity increaseth, so may thy good works go before it to prepare the way. The horn of righteousness that thou hast exalted, may it continue to enforce thee ; the standard of salvation that thou hast set up, may it bless, as it must hallow, all thy energies, and rally the faintheartedness of thy friends around thee ; surely in this sign shalt thou conquer. Walk not so entirely in the old way but that the new light may shine about thee, and shed its sweet influence upon thee ; so shall thy fulness break forth to the right hand and to the left, and fill the whole land ; thy enemies shall be put to shame, and thy friends shall wonder at thee.

I was now entering another period of my life ; I had emerged from boyhood. *Oh ! nec adhuc juvenis nec jam puer utilis atas*, — usable that is, but, alas ! how seldom made useful. I had to leave my old friends and familiar fancies and bind myself to new interests, — enlist myself in the service of the world. The coloring of the sunrise, the glow of the early morn, was dying fast away ; the day was set in fully ; I had to look abroad and make provision for it. There is a sense of insufficiency in a boy, — a shrinking, painful, self-abasing sense, — that

makes him dread the very idea of a profession ; of any other at least than the sea or army, or such like, where there is little or no collision, — none at all in the first instance, — no conflict with the worldly interests of others. The youngster is put into a groove, and there he must needs run on ; he gets forward without any effort of his own, by the mere mechanical contrivance of the thing ; he has no care of the morrow — no professional care, that is — any more than a sparrow or a lily. But I had no such chance as this. If I ever felt within me, as, indeed, I had most often done, any stirring of the soul, — an instinct at the scent of blood, — a military propensity, — my parents had not chosen to indulge it ; they overruled me to other destinies. I was addicted, or they had heard so, to book learning, and therefore I was sent to Cambridge and entered at a great college, — great-bellied that is, but with a heart in its belly no bigger than a pin's head, reversing the quality of the bee, — the *ingentes animas in parvo corpore*, — big, not in pregnancy of promise, but with a most lethargic dropsy ; great in itself, but in its progeny most curiously diminutive ; a mountain overteeming with mice ; a pitiful old sow condemned to support at once her pigs of many successive farrows, the older ones loath to give place, and holding still on with their younger brethren, battenning there, and fattening, not for profit but for curiosity and show, to prove how the largest possible load of fat may be laid upon the smallest proportion of bone and muscle. There I was to be admitted, — in the Latin sense, I take it, of the *admissus equus*, and that, too, a double sense : but a truce to parables ; as Solomon says, there is no end of making them. However, for my journey thither ; I well remember it ; I went alone by the stagecoach, anticipating discomfort, and therefore prepared to turn into a reality every appearance of it. The weather was dark

and lowering, mist and rain and cloudiness had all the predominance,—on my faith, a most dolorous day, of the kind that makes one shrink within one's cloak at the very aspect of it. The atmosphere sat heavy upon my spirit, sinking it deeper and deeper into depression. The country about Cambridge, as Robert Hall himself tells us, even on a mind so powerful as his wrought most wofully ; it depressed him to the level of its own flatness. One feels there like a turkey upon a plain ; one can't rise above it ; one is powerless to take wing, —

“ Velle videmur et in mediis conatibus ægri
Succidimus.”

The face of the country was without a feature ; a country of fog and rain, —

“ Regio digna prorsus quam colli contineat commingerent.”

There was no character in it that could impress itself upon the blank of my soul. I looked around me for comfort and could find none. Time, however, will on, albeit the spirit may drag back and sink in stagnation ; accordingly in due course I got to my journey's end. But I was no gainer by the achievement ; the despondency that was in me only darkened into despair. The vacation was not yet over ; the streets were as dull and disconsolate-looking as the day itself, — a city without a soul to enliven it. This, perhaps, was all the better for me in the condition that I then was. A quick succession of objects on a close-hauled, spiritless humor, is like a tide running in upon it ; it forces the mind upon its wake, it prevents it from standing out and feeling itself at large. So far, then, it was well with me. My own gloominess was not darkened into a deeper shade by the light-glancing activity of the things about me ; but the trial was yet to come. First, there was the admission, — matriculation I think they call it, — a birth not to a mother who *dotes upon us, and lives only for us, but an adoption, an*

apprenticeship rather, to one who has little or no concern with us, who leaves us to take our chance as it may come, to live or perish intellectually, sink or swim, as the tide may serve us. With this, the ignorance that knows not even to ask, the gaze of strangers upon our forlorn, gaping untowardliness, curiosity without sympathy, the daintiness of our raw, shrinking sense turned and twisted about by the hard hand of custom ; this, as it seemed to me, had it lasted but a minute longer, must have been utterly insupportable ; then the hurry and skurry about furniture, to be draggled despairingly in the mire through a long, dismal day, the consciousness of imposition, together with the weakness that will not, or dares not, vindicate itself against it ; — this was the moral of my day, the first of my freshmanship. But, if the day was dark, what should the night be ? Heaven defend me from its recollection ; and yet how shall I forget it ?

A dreary, cold, vast, comfortless room in an ancient building ; a room ancient in itself, but without any character or interest of antiquity ; here and there a chair or table, as completely lost in its immensity as the fragments of a wreck in that of the ocean. To occupy such a place as this in joint tenancy with the rats ; to find the remnant of one's comfort consigned to the keeping of an old, dirty, hard-featured, coarse-spoken bed-maker ; hopeless of all help, remote from all friendly communings : such an evening as this, the first that I passed in college, I would not encounter again, no, not for a whole year of a Mahometan paradise : so entirely does our happiness depend upon the force of our character. Go forward ; be bold ; whatever you do, do it confidently, and give yourself to it wholly. I can imagine that even the veriest villain, if he be, indeed, a consummate villain, must be more content by far and better pleased with himself than *his half-faced counterfeit* ; and this, simply, by force of

the principle above stated. As for myself, time, experience, and thought, but chiefly the last, have given me a certain force of mind. I am well assured that the grievances I have just mentioned would be trifles light as air, mere shadows, if I were again to encounter them ; they would weigh upon me just as much as a straw upon a pyramid ; I should break them as green withes, as tow against the fire. The desolation that is without, by force of what the Schoolmen call antiperistasis, suggests to me the comfort from within, — the resources of thought and imagination. They would people the forlorn chamber with a living host, and on the dead blank wall would they trace their airy symbols, their significant surmises, the strong characters of their creativeness. "What," said the nobleman to the sage, "have you got by your philosophy ?" "Society in myself," was the answer ; and it was a true, and forceful, and sufficient answer ; it does honor alike to the philosopher and to the spirit that had so instructed him.

But as for my own poor person, I was at that time short of a great faculty, — that of self-sufficiency ; a faculty generated out of habitual activity, energy, and purposed determination of mind ; the results of regular and continual mental exercise ; this I had not acquired, and therefore all my other acquisitions were comparatively little worth. Other "good havings," as Shakspeare calls them, I was master of, — such as the particular methods that I have described as my auxiliaries in reading and other cases, together with one quality besides that I have nowhere taken credit for, — that of taste ; in other words, the sentiment of beauty, the perception of whatever is lovely, and natural, and poetical ; and so far did this sentiment overrule me, that often in my young days at Eton have I chosen to miss my turn, to forego the *order of my recital*, merely that I might have the

longer time to dwell upon my dear subjects, to hold converse with Horace, to commune with the spirit of Virgil, to drink a long, continuous draught of that delicious poetry, and compress it, while I might, upon my palate. But this delicacy of taste, apart from determination, is but a feeble feminine delicacy. Like the moon, it "pales its ineffective light"; it is a kind of pearl,—a precious thing truly,—an exquisite jewel, and yet no way fitted for common currency and traffic, but rather abhorrent from them. So it was with me. The tendency of my taste was to the shade rather than to the open world, the glare of daylight. This is pity; the more so, because here the thing that is pitiful is lovely also. The fact is, that I did not pursue my purpose far enough; for to those only who venture wide out, who persist long enough in a given path, belong the ripe fruits of perseverance,—forwardness, steadiness, and definitiveness of aim. Of these I had none; though in truth all the methods of instruction, and of self-instruction particularly, are good either for these or nothing. All such means and appliances may be regarded as the tributary streams of a great river,—of thoughtfulness; wherever one falls in with them, if one goes along with them far enough, if one persists in following their guidance despite all sorts of petty difficulties, one is sure to get at last to the main stream, and there we are at once in deep water; our course is a smooth, regular, and easy one; we go along *secundo flumine*; the voyage of our life is no longer bound in shallows and in miseries; our force of mind, our native current, is tide, oars, and sails to us: but if we pursue these preliminary methods, these tributary rivulets, only till we encounter some difficulty, and then fall back like so many Fainthearts in our pilgrim's progress, then all is weariness and vexation for us,—a labyrinth without a clew, an inextricable error; with hypochondria, the

black, deadly, venom-sweltered spider, lurking in the close corner, and meditating to dart out upon the poor, wretched fly that may have chanced to entangle itself there.

I acquired this habit afterwards, — the habit of perseverance to the very point, — and it was worth to me one of the chief blessings of my life. Here I must be allowed to pause and moralize a brief moment. I would guard every student and self-instructor against a frequent, but most fatal error. I have proved it dearly ; it made a boy of me, or, I should say, kept me in my boyishness, years and years after I should have been a perfect man. It is expounded in a few words. George Whitefield, I think, or one of his contemporary Dissenters, has told us, that Satan tempts us sometimes by ceasing to tempt, — that is, by pretending to give up the contest and hiding himself away ; and this is one of his most dangerous temptations. Then it is that we are given over to our confidence, — our confidence lapses into security, — our security into supineness ; the wheel, as the poet says, is come full round, and so we are brought home again to our old habit. Even thus we fare with our difficulties. In the first place we make monsters of them by force of our imagination. We fancy them as things beyond hope, utterly insurmountable. However, upon some strong suggestion we are induced to betake ourselves to the work, and that work, to our abundant surprise, we find easy enough, if we only set ourselves to it in the right method, — the method, that is, of ascending by regular steps, instead of attempting to overleap every thing at a bound, or by a succession of bounds, and so to get at once from the bottom to the summit. This is the fool's effort ; but, if we proceed in a rational way, we see that our presumed difficulties are rather shadowy *than substantial* ; the way is clear, the prospect

is open, before our eyes ; our success is in our hands. Well, and what then ? Surely, as we near our game, the scent is warmer and our exertions should be quicker. The moment that our enemy is giving way is the moment of all others that we should press upon him ; so say Reason and Experience, but Confidence is no good listener, — she regards them not. In almost all processes of study, — of study, I mean, for the mind's sake, and not for any special object, — we foil ourselves in this way. When once we have our mark in sight, or rather, as soon as we have a general notion of it, we are content so. We view it as we would a mountain in the distance. We care not to go up to it ; a little more perseverance would have saved us, and a little less has ruined us. We remain short. We pretend to fathom with a line that does not reach to the bottom, and judge of the difference as we may, by the eye or otherwise ; in short at hap-hazard, — *acribus initis, incurioso fine.* Thus the acquisition is made uncertain, and, what is vastly more important, the exercise is lost, the discipline, the assurance, together with the habits of mind arising from them. One half of the world is deterred from all good purposes by imaginary danger and difficulty, and nine tenths of the other half are sent to sleep on the way by their own security. *Faciunt nœ, intelligendo ut nihil intelligent.* The hare makes a strong start, but slumbers away the results of its first success ; the tortoise plods on, and so makes its assurance safe. Once more, then, let every man rest his hopes on his perseverance. There is scarcely any one without his infirmity, and no one at all without the means of conquering it. Do we complain, as most of us have reason to do, that, from lack of readiness, promptitude, self-possession, or whatever else, we have no relish of general conversation ; that we are compelled, in spite of ourselves, to

hold, not our peace, but our disquietude and vexation ? here we have our remedy : —

“ Sanza la qual chi la sua vita consuma
Cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia,
Qual fumo in aere, od in acqua la schiuma.”

So of oratory, so of composition, of law studies, and medical studies, and theological studies ; in short, all learning and accomplishment ; and success must derive itself hence, or else be confessed bastard. Genius without it is a mere fever, — a heat that consumes instead of strengthening. I entreat you, then, above all earthly things, make a point of perseverance. Persist unto the end. It may be said truly of difficulty, what is said fabulously of the devil, — talk of it, think of it, and forthwith it will be present to you ; for one substance of it, as the poet says of grief, there are at least twenty shadows.

But I am wide of my professed subject. When I was last upon it, it was just at my entrance into the University. This is the most important point of a gentleman's life, — nothing else is comparable to it ; and yet of all others it is the one most absolutely set at hazard. Set no, thrown I should rather say, — committed to the fortune of the die. Generally a man sends his son to college as if he were sending him to a campaign, to take his chance there through good hap, and evil hap, and every kind of hap. He considers him, in short, as altogether beyond his control, and clears himself in his own conscience of the consequences. But, in fact, how does this stand ? It is true that risk must be run, and no inconsiderable risk either ; but much may be done to qualify it by good preliminary measures. Let a father only inquire of the college tutor, or any other trustworthy person, what may be the condition of the college ? what undergraduates he can recommend to his son as his asso-

ciates? — let him procure an introduction to them, and consign the freshman to a set. If the choice be a judicious one, as it usually will be in such a case, the crisis will then be past, the danger in a great measure over. Whereas, as things go, it has happened hundreds and thousands of times that the destinies, the livelong destinies, of a young man have been fixed upon him from the mere accident of his taking his place at the hall-table for the first day or two of his appearance next to an idler, or rake, or blackguard. Conversation arises, acquaintance is brought on, familiarity perhaps ensues, our novice is in the meshes, and has not the force, even if he should have the inclination, to break through them. If one touch pitch, one can hardly choose but to be defiled by it, and the difficulty is no less to wash off the pollution when one has once contracted it. It is a clinging, penetrating evil, — it gets at once into the grain.

Independence, or self-dependence rather, — the word is of Irish origin, but I adopt it nevertheless, — is a great developer of manhood. There is an elasticity in the young spirit like that of the atmospherical air ; one may be compressed into a strange narrowness of compass ; one's faculties may be reduced by coercion to the measure of a pin's point, — may shrink like sinews for lack of service. But once remove the constraint, open a wider sphere of action, give a fair stage and free play, with no favor, and the spirit, twenty chances to one, will expand itself in proportion, and occupy the whole space allowed it. Here it is my experience that speaks ; I was left alone, I found that I was my own master, I had a hundred things to provide, and order, and manage ; I felt that I was no longer a boy, and I assumed, as of my proper right, the faculties of a man, together with the functions.

It is astonishing how the assumption wrought upon my intellect ; it seemed to give me, in some respects, a new

mind. Things that I should have doubted upon before, that would have perplexed me strangely, I now regarded as of course ; I began to take confidence for my counsellor, — as, indeed, to generalize my individuality, the more we live in the world, the wider our experience, the more clearly do we see, and feel, that in all things there is a self-regulating principle, if we had only the assurance to avail ourselves of it, and that we might spare ourselves nine tenths at least of all our cares, and troubles, and anxieties. Such is the pervading folly of our lives ; we seek our happiness at great charges, and therefore vainly, while we assume our wretchedness gratuitously, — usurping, as the poet says, what we were never born to.

I was not happy in my outset. They turned me adrift in the University, and there left me without friend or counsellor. The devil, as he is always at hand, supplied the vacuity, and helped me, for his own ends, out of my dreary solitude ; I was drawn into a wild set, and speedily became one of them. For a year, — a college year, I mean, bating the long vacation, — I never looked into a book. In fact, it is a literal truth that I owned no such thing for nearly that whole time, unless book-rank can be attributed to Sporting Magazines and such like efflorescences of idleness ; as for our lecture books, there was a set of them in my room lying there loosely, prostitute to all comers, and these I seized to my own service as waifs or estrays, — in which of the two rights I leave those learned in the law to decide for me.

However, during the whole of this career, I was happy enough to preserve myself from all depth of infection ; I was never a profligate. Dissipated I certainly was, but not in the worst sense ; I was irregular, rash, and reckless ; my mental faculties were dissipated, but not my moral principles nor my integrity. I lived beyond my means not merely in this respect, or that, but at all

points. The details are best spared ; to follow such a course through, to rake in the gutter of indiscipline, is but a filthy curiosity. Not that I have any thing on my memory to shock me, though I have very much to regret. The vanities of youth weigh lightly upon the conscience. The proximity of Newmarket, the “fatal facility” of indulgence, revived my passion for the turf. All my algebra, and it was little enough, went to the calculation of the odds ; and, whenever my imagination was let wholly loose, it was off at once, by the force of its own bias, to the betting-stand and race-course. In this I had no lack of fellow-feeling ; several of my associates were as deep in it as myself, and by continual conversation we communicated our warmth, we reflected lights mutually. This was a beginning of mischief, at any rate it might be so ; but at the rate I went it was no great mischief in itself. But sin is a prolific stock, one license makes many. Hence waste and extravagance of all kinds,—horses, dogs, and tandems, drinking and card-playing ; when the humor is once out, it breaks away widely ; it forces itself into many channels. Unfortunately, at both the Universities the tradesmen are too often the worst tempters. Where there is the wish to spend money, the means are not wanting. Every youngster has more credit than belongs to him ; and hasty credit is too frequently the parent of lasting disgrace,—the generating point of a long, dark line of discomfort and humiliation.

I went on in this train for some seven or eight months, and was well content to bring it to a close. I had entered upon it partly from vanity, partly from vacancy, and the remainder from my own natural propensity; but the three-fold cord, in this case, was soon broken. I felt that my vanity was rather stung than soothed by the results of its exhibition in this way; my vacancy was left unfilled, and my original bias had spent itself to absolute exhaustion;

all this while I was only acting a part, and a wearisome one at last I found it. If I was a sad dog, I was a lame one also ; an animal that ran not upon all-fours, — one-sided and out of joint. I had never been what is called by the French a frank idler, — an idler with all my heart. I attempted to serve two masters ; but while I did the work of the one, I clung in affection to the other. My fits and starts of intellect, my occasional philosophy, — philosophy in its proper sense, the love of wisdom, — were a sort of St. Vitus's dance to me ; they affected me strangely in my march ; threw me out of my property, and made an awkward, unseemly creature of me. I was acted upon by two different forces in two different directions. I was twisted and turned by them, as it seemed to my associates, most unaccountably. There were undercurrents in my course, cross influences that they knew not of ; — hence all my eddyings and contrarieties.

“Transverso mentem dubiam torrente tulerunt.”

In the grown man, the intellectual and social qualities assist each other mutually, they are a reciprocal charm ; but not so in the boy. At so early a day the frame of the intellect is too imperfect, its faculties and its whole constitution too loose, to enable it to walk easily and jauntily. It must set itself for every act, it must do every thing with an effort ; and where effort is, there is no grace of nature ; the smooth glassiness of the stream, the easy pleasure of society, is ruffled, disturbed, and perished. Such was my condition at that time, my elemental, chaotic state. Whatever subject might be started, I saw, or fancied that I saw, in it more than could be seen by my young friends. I would be importuning action with my theories ; qualifying what was with what might be ; sketching from half-images, and designing from half-sketches, and, consequently, making an abortion of every

thing. Besides, I had the torment of the apostate in me. I was a traitor to my first allegiance, a renegade to my first love ; and I repented it in disquietude. No man ever felt deeply the pleasures of the intellect, but he preferred them incomparably to those of sense ; I mean as the staple of his life, its main texture, a texture to be wrought upon, of course, and varied, and embroidered, according to fancy; but still it must be the ground, the substance, otherwise his fabric is mere warpwork to him. The denunciations of the prophet against the deserter of his early love, the virgin of his espousals, seemed to be realized in me. I was ill at ease within myself, distracted and dissatisfied. Moreover, I had already wellnigh stranded myself in my worldly voyage,

“ By showing a more swelling port
Than my faint means would grant continuance.”

I found that I must shorten sail, and even more than that, run for a while under bare poles, or else be blown fairly under water. Luckily the long vacation was at hand. I had leisure to wean myself from my vanities. I determined to shape my course anew as soon as the tide should turn, and occasion serve me.

My health at this time was by no means strong ; the irregularity of my life at Cambridge was not at all likely to confirm it. My dawn of manhood was standing tip-toe, as Shakspeare says, on the mountain-top. My constitution was in a sort of doubtful balance, a single touch was enough to determine it either for good or evil. Happily for me, at that crisis I had good advice, and, withal, the means of following it. I had some relations at a little town in the mountain range of the Vosges, in France, a place celebrated for its mineral waters. They were gone there to spend the season, and it was agreed that I should join them. I set out accordingly, and, after a week's travelling over horrible roads and through a vile

country, I reached the place. From the point where I had left the mail-post, I had five-and-forty miles yet to go. I might have found conveyances enough if I could have paid for them, but I had been an ill husband of my money, and at last utterly divorced from it. Temptations had been strong, and flesh, and spirit too, both weak and willing, at Paris and elsewhere. I was at a difficulty to make ends meet. However, as my necessity counselled me, I undertook to walk it out manfully ; to tax my person, and so to save my purse ; as I had been wasteful at the brim, to spare tardily at the bottom. Forty-five miles in the dog-days, over a hilly country, — *enanta, paranta, catanta te*, — is enough to try the strength of any man. As for me, I was shattered to pieces by it. As I got upon the height that commands the town, I threw myself at my length by the road-side, and, if a wagon had been coming over me, I could not have stirred an inch to save myself. But such was my enthusiasm for fine scenery that the sight before me, the prospect of the sweet valley at my feet, revived me at once, set my blood in flow again, and brought my heart into full action. So much so, that instead of going straight down to “take mine ease at my own inn,” I lingered about there among hills, woods, and meadows a good hour at least, until the sun had taken his last look, and left me alone in darkness.

Here was a fine range for the lover of the picturesque. Valleys at almost every point of the compass, like spokes in a wheel radiating from a focus ; torrents, streams, woods, ruins, and cascades, with all the other features of mountain scenery. For my first day or two, as soon as I had passed the lustration of the baths, I was out from morning to night, on foot or horseback, exploring everywhere, observing and comparing. At last I fixed my choice. Just at the elbow of a valley, at the ter-

mination of a long, high ridge, I found a delicious sequestered resting-place, where, like a mountain bandit, I could lie in ambush, and thread both valleys with my eye from a single point. Thither I used to go every morning with a volume of Thucydides, a small German edition, and there would I stay till the sun had measured half the heavens. In those mountain ranges the combinations are so many, the varieties of light and shade so sudden and so powerful, that there is no end of one's interest. Sameness has no existence there ; one might walk over the same ground for months together, and never see the same landscape. There I made my daily pilgrimage, I and my little book together. What should have put it into my head I cannot tell, but I had heard, I knew indeed, that Thucydides was a fearfully hard writer, and I set myself to master him. I devoted the vacation to my work ; the book, the whole book, and nothing but the book. This was a great stroke ; I succeeded to my entire content. I got him almost literally by heart. I was as familiar with him as with an old song ; and I recommend all Greek students to cultivate the same familiarity either with him or some other classic. There is an old admonition, —*cave ab homine unius libri.* Beware of the single-book man ; but I should have never felt its meaning unless I had so read Thucydides. One should study a book, and know it, and feel it, *prosus penitusque*, through and through, till one fancies that one must have written it one's self. We should have not merely a knowledge, but, as it were, a personal experience of it. We must feed upon it, and digest it, —*Serpens nisi serpentem comederit non fit draco.* This is the true practice. Whereas, in general, people read, and, if they comprehend as they go on, they think it well ; though all the while they grasp each successive subject only to pass it through their hands, *cursorum lani-*

pada tradunt. The truth is that the knowledge, not indeed of a language, but of a national literature, is like that of human nature ; books are the spirits of men ; to attain it we may have many acquaintances, but we must have one or two thorough friends ; we must marry ourselves to a wife, or otherwise we shall never be at home, nor ever know the blessing of a proper, authentic, legitimate offspring. The intellect begotten and born of promiscuous reading — lecturience I have elsewhere called it — is spurious of course, and foredoomed to worthlessness. Even before marriage, a mere boy, one who has never been intimately conversant with a person of the other sex, feels that he is at a distance from them, he lacks assurance in their society ; but, when once that immediate union has taken place, when, in Homer's phrase, he has been mingled with them in love, has blended his being in that of another, forthwith he takes a new tone, — he becomes manly in his manners, ready, confident, and familiar with the whole sex. This, I mean, is the tendency of our nature, — not that it is always carried fully out, — and so also in books ; when we know one thoroughly, when all its darkness is become daylight to us, — the spirit of its author, as it were, our second conscience, — then we may go on boldly, and learn intuitively. We carry a light about with us that serves to illustrate every thing else. We have got a fulcrum, and by means of it we can move any subject that we please. We have a piece of ground that we can call properly our own. We are absolute freeholders ; we have a stake in the country, — a real interest, a privilege of franchise, through the whole.

CHAPTER XI.

"With knowledge drawn from nature's living page,
Politely learned and elegantly sage,
They seize each grace with native force of mind,
While puzzled learning blunders far behind." — POPE.

BUT my advantage from these excursions was not confined within the limits of Thucydides' history. Certain living pages were opened to me, and those I studied with little less interest than the records of Spartan and Athenian rivalry. Divers times, in the course of my readings and wanderings, I had fallen in with an old man, dressed country fashion, little better than a peasant, but evidently a gentleman. At first he knew not what to make of me. He would eye me somewhat suspiciously, pass on, and then turn to eye me again, in most careful perplexity. I might have been a poacher, and that concerned his office ; or a woodstealer, and that also would touch him nearly ; or, more likely than either, a crossed lover, or dreamer of poetical dreams, and even this might awaken the curiosity of an idle man. One morning he came suddenly upon me, and entered at once into conversation. He had served in the army ; indeed, I hardly ever knew a Frenchman of his age who had not ; but he had also served against the British in Spain, and therefore felt, or professed to feel, an interest about England and her dependencies. We were soon on the best possible terms, — he talking and questioning, and I listening, blundering, and guessing ; but the sun was already westward over the hill, the day was far on ; my good colloquist would have me, *bon gré mal gré*, walk down with him to his "*campagne*," his country-house, and take some luncheon there. There was no gainsaying him ;

neither words nor will were proof against his determination. I was obliged at last to go, and was introduced to his house and family. It was a poor little place, more like an old English summer-house than any thing else, daubed and painted most vilely, after the French taste, by way of embellishment ; in all, four or five rooms, looking, with their partitions, as if a country carpenter had extemporized them in an hour ; an old deal table and a few chairs, blinds, without curtains to the windows, an ancient lady wife, and her three young daughters. Pity they were not prettier ! — my heart was in its Maytide, and a single lovely face would have shed its radiance through the whole room, given a hue of gold, a visionary splendor, to its bareness and desolation. However, I was welcome, and so every thing wore a charm for me. True, the daughters were not pretty ; the last touches in their face had been forgotten, — not pretty, and, I grieve to say it, plain ; nor simply plain, but, against all my bias to believe them otherwise, absolutely ugly, — faces and figures that might almost justify our prejudice about French apishness ; hollow-visaged, sallow, and featureless. But this was only while they were still ; their voices redeemed them into pleasingness. They were condemned unheard, — but, upon oyer, sentence was reversed. Their eyes and tongues were busy with continual witchery to make up their other deficiencies. Immediately I was one of them. We talked as familiarly as though I had been a roving brother, just home from a far voyage. Divers brothers had they, but they were out, each in his vocation, and I did not very deeply deplore their absence ; the void pleased me well, — there was the more room for our sympathies. But one of these said brothers was something of an English scholar ; at all events, he had some taste for our literature. There were English books about the room, — Pope, Sterne,

and Goldsmith, of course in the first rank, as they always are where a Frenchman is the arbiter. The young ladies had brought these few volumes over from the town where they chiefly lived, this being a mere summer residence, to amuse their solitude. It was only an experiment ; they knew hardly a word of the language ; they had just been trying their wits upon poor Goldsmith as I came in. Difficulties innumerable had arisen, and of course I was the referee. I devoted myself to the service in all gallantry and complaisance. The books were produced, one word explained, and then another, — but this was an unsatisfactory process, and at last, by common consent, though without any express order, we sat down together and made a lesson of it. I was young and boyish-looking ; they were gay and artless. They felt an interest in their amusement. They were not in the least afraid of me, and when, after an hour's session, I rose to take my leave, they insisted that I must stop and read French with them, as they said, in revenge. My vindictiveness was of no very heinous quality ; I could have laughed it away, or read it away, or kissed it away, whichever they had pleased. But I was compelled to go, and yet anxious so to depart as one hoping to return, — in short, to leave the access open for another visit. Accordingly, I had readiness enough of wit in the declaration of my excuses and regrets to say that I was engaged at present. The damsels caught at the word, — “O, then, will you come again to-morrow ? We shall expect you at the same time.” This to English ears sounded rather too much like an usurpation of parental authority. But French fathers are generally kind souls ; it is not often for ceremony's sake that they will interfere with the enjoyment of their children. The lady was out of the room, but the old gentleman took up the hint and sent it home with a most cordial assurance of his good-will, and a promise,

that, if I would come over in the early morning, he would provide me with a gun, and take me on a forest range. This looked gloriously ; I pledged myself to him with all thanks, and walked home again in a towering height of spirits, slaughtering deer and wild boars all the way in my imagination, and despising myself for the part I had taken in our paltry field-sports of England.

The next morning be sure I was no laggard ; I put the very sun to shame for his tardiness ; I was speedily at my trysting-place, and found every thing there in readiness before me. The old *surintendant* of the forest, for such he was, with his gruff welcome and hearty shake of the hand, and two of his three daughters, with all the customary shooting apparatus, and their own more proper artillery of smiles, questions, and kind greetings. They had soon appointed me *cap-à-pie*, and sent me forth, as the ladies of old did their true cavaliers, on my sporting knight-errantry. We left amidst a profusion of smiling looks and good wishes, and in five minutes were in the forest. My interest was at its height,—strained even to the highest pitch of my former imaginations ; I was a mighty hunter before the Lord.

“Quod optanti divūm promittere nemo
Auderet, volvendo dies en attulit ulro.”

Here I was in that vast forest track, reaching, as I had heard, and well believed, with here and there a few interruptions, from the Netherlands almost up to Switzerland ; the wide-spreading and far-stretching woodland zone girding Nature in her sleep,—in the long sleep that she had slept from the times before the flood.

“Ubi cerva sylvicultrix, ubi aper nemorivagus.”

Or, in Walter Scott's translation of it, —

“Would that I were as I have been,
Chasing the deer in the forest green,
With bended bow and bloodhound free,
For that 's the life is meet for me.”

I walked along warily, like a sharpshooter in a wood, with felonious intent, and a frown of defiance on my brow, — *Spumantemque dari*. But I must leave Virgil to the readers of Virgil, — no more of him. I have given too much already.

Suddenly I heard a shot fired ; I started round, while my companion was screaming out to me, with all vehemence of gesticulation, — “*Voila-là, — à gauche, — tirez donc, — tirez.*” I looked eagerly along the line he pointed, but I could see nothing more dignified than a tomtit, or some such little wretch, flying between the low branches. Still these expostulations were renewed, — “*Mais comment donc, — que fait-il, Monsieur? il me paroît que Monsieur n'est pas si grand amateur. Vous n'êtes pas, donc, très passionné, Monsieur, pour la chasse.*” To such an appeal to my sportsmanship I could say nothing, but there I stood gaping like a fool, and no doubt got credit as one. This, then, was my dignity of danger. It ended as did the lives of the Decii, according to the construction of the Eton boy, “*exitu pari.*” I had hoped, when I got back to college and heard from my perdicide comrades there the tale of their September exploits, to silence them into wonder, to astound them into nothingness, by the history of my forest achievements, and my exulting “*adsum qui feci*” ; but it was otherwise ordained. The dimensions of my imaginary game were dwindled down in a trice to “rats, and mice, and such small deer.” I walked on for another hour, humored the impatience of my friend by massacring a poor wren or two, and then, satisfied with my doings for the day, contrived to lose, or, in other words, to throw away, the flint from my old gun ; and on that plea, as there could be no substitution for its service, I walked quietly home again, — *quantum mutatus, — and yet not exuvias induitus.* Pardon me,

good reader. Pedantry is as hard a thing to shake off as the old man of Sinbad.

I returned to my young ladies, — mine I call them, for I had a property in them by right of tutorship, — and, after a profusion of condolences on my ill sport, and congratulations on my return, we sat down again to Goldsmith's Traveller. This, in my judgment, is a very elegant and pretty poem, but without any such power of genius as can serve to account for its exalted reputation. I love it much more for the associations thus connected with it than for any merits of its own. However, the wise man tells us that even a dish of herbs is savory where love is, — and the lively humor of my young pupils would have seasoned a much more insipid poem. I was surprised at the rapidity of their progress. They seemed, with their piercing black eyes, to look into the inmost sentiments, — through the very heart and soul of the author. What they knew of our language before they had learned by a process of their own, and one that I hold to be very highly commendable as an intellectual discipline. They used to decipher every sentence, — make it out as one would do ciphers, — expound it as one might hieroglyphics, — by putting hypotheses, — supposing probable or possible meanings, and then endeavouring to make the construction suit them. This is an admirable exercise of ingenuity, and it is the only way that one can really learn languages to any purpose ; otherwise one only remembers words, — and the memory is very seldom indeed worth the pains. To this practice of these sisters I attribute very much of their quickness, for quick they were, and intelligent, and apprehensive in a very great degree, — so much so, that, sitting there as their instructor, although I was no fool either, I was yet the stupidest of the party. But there was something that *surprised me more*, and concerned me, too, more.

nearly, than their advancement. Certainly my service was a wholly disinterested one. I had never contemplated any benefit for myself except that of reciprocal kindness ; but so it was, that in the course of a few lessons I found myself marvellously improved, not in readiness of word merely, but in my general faculty ; not only in the leaves and branches, but in the main trunk itself. This astonished me at the time, but I see now that there was nothing extraordinary in it ; it depended not upon any thing special in my case, but on a universal principle, — the principle that he who instructs others is sure to better his own instruction also.

It was the answer of Priestley, when a man came to him regretting his ignorance of some subject, and asking how he should best inform himself upon it, — “ O,” said the philosopher, “ write a book about it.” This may be good counsel, but if it had been to teach that subject to some one else, I am convinced that it would have been still better. Such instruction is blest doubly, in the giver as well as taker. By imparting to others the light of one’s own lamp, one multiplies it for one’s self. It is like the growth of interest from capital, — every accrual as it arises falls back into the mass, becomes confounded with it, and increases its future development. I do not mean to say that this is necessarily the case in every kind of teaching, for instance in that of a schoolmaster towards his scholars ; there, whatever a boy gets, to speak generally, he gets in the way of routine ; and perhaps, like the poor mill-horse, half blinds himself, or at least deadens and dulls his faculties, by the dizziness, the weary continuity, of the round. He would as soon throw his book at his master’s head as ask him a question, except upon the very direst necessity ; the consequence is, that he is as many years about his Latin and Greek as he ought to have been months. But this is not the case that I

would put. I am recommending the instruction not of mere children, but of intelligent, rational young people. Such were my three damsels. Every sentence, every word, was the root of a dozen questions ; I was driven upon my last reserves,—compelled to fathom the very utmost depths of my resources ; all that I could do in the way of illustration, analogy, interpretation, was little enough for my purpose ; they knew nothing of grammar, I had to supply all deficiencies, and correct all errors. This was trying work, my faculties were stretched shrewdly to compass it ; I could barely answer their requirements ; I hope their husbands were more successful when they took these ladies under their tutorship.

In requital of my pains, I had the pleasure of learning French from their dear lips. To teach a woman is delightful, and to be taught by her is still more so. There is a kindness between the parties, a confidence, a sympathy,—even if there be no warmer feeling. We are not ashamed of our blunders and inadvertencies. The superiority of knowledge on the one side is levelled by that of sex on the other ; I must declare myself from the poet,—

“ T is pleasant to be schooled in a strange tongue
By female lips and eyes,— that is, I mean,
Where both the teacher and the taught are young,
As was the case, at least, where I have been.
They smile so when one 's right, and when one 's wrong
They smile still more, and then there intervene
Pressure of hands ; perhaps, too, a chaste kiss ;—
I 've learned the little that I know from this.”

I hope that this quotation may be new to my lady readers, if indeed I should ever be so honored ; it is from a bad book, but if they would read more upon the subject, if they would feel it more fully and draw their feeling from a purer source, let me commend them to Waverley ; I would fain offer the occasion of recurring to

a work of genius, that so I may in some sort strike the balance and compensate my own dulness.

For near three weeks I was a continual visiter at their little summer-house, — a summer-house indeed ! — and truly my best feelings, my kindness, and my tenderness summered themselves there most complacently; so familiar was my presence, that their very gate, as I went up to it, with the morning sun behind me, seemed, in my poor fancy, to take my shadow by anticipation as conscious of my coming. But time brings all things to an end. Necessity is a hard master, a cruel executioner. He brooks no entertainment, listens to no plea of pity, but drags off his destined ones by the hair, and cuts in twain all hopes, pleasures, and affections most remorselessly. The hour approached and I must needs greet them for the last time. But here I saw scope for consideration. Where there has been joy in meeting, it is no such far-sighted speculation, such strange forethought of wisdom, to look for painfulness at parting ; this is the law of compensation, a law whereto we are all liable. It is true there was little or no entanglement among us ; no *chaude mêlée*, or, as we cold islanders have corrupted both word and sense, chance-medley of affections ; consequently there was not likely to be any fluttering to get free. I know not that any one of us had dreamed of love. I protest that ever more I treated them most sisterly ; nevertheless the fondness even of a sister may betray itself at parting with a tear, and that tear, as the suspicion of the elders would construe it, might be distilled from a warmer alembic than that of mere friendship. On the whole, then, I forbore my leave-taking ; in fact it would have been an impotent thing, — a masking of the warm hand in the glove even at the very moment of greeting. How could I put weeks of kindness, years of regret, ages of recollection, into a single instance of pres-

sure, — a momentary marriage of the hands, ay, or even of the lips ? it was in vain to hope it. Upon this suggestion I did wisely rather than kindly. Tears or smiles, affection or scorn, sympathy or indifference, whatever their mood, I spared them the exhibition of it ; betaking myself to the poor, pedant-like expedient of setting forth my acknowledgments, clerkwise, with pen and paper ; of giving my affections to flow in ink, and quitting the whole sum of my gratitude by a score of written words.

But, O, how gladly at this moment do I repeat those acknowledgments, and renew the fresh flowings of that gratitude ! Years have past, hearts have grown dead in the interval, the love of many is waxed cold ; but for me, the recollection falls over me in the twilight of my fancy, in my meditative musings, like the dew of evening after the hot summer day ; it glistens in my eye, it melts into my heart, it refreshes my spirit graciously. The blessing of Heaven be upon that spot ! as the brightness of my joy has gladdened it to me, so shall it be sanctified to me by my prayers. Should its breath ever blow upon me again, though from a far distance, should I come by chance or purpose within the range of its redolence, it shall be my religion to make a pilgrimage there. And yet I know not, — vows are rash things, — it must be as it may be, — as the tone and temper of my heart shall then overrule me. For what says the poet, —

“ Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria, — e cio sa 'l tuo dottore.”

However, in my absence as in my presence, peace be upon that house, and upon you its young inmates. You are now, or you well may be, wives and mothers ; other cares, and hopes, and duties have come upon you ; but, should you ever bestow a thought upon your young Englishman, *think of him* as one who never ceases in all

gratitude to think of you, grieving that kindness should be so severed, that such friendship should be of short continuance. In the happy hour when you teach your children what he taught you, remember, and, if you may, remember kindly, him of whom you learnt it, and whose prayer at this moment it is, that you may be zealous to employ those good gifts — that vivacity, and earnestness, and intelligence, and goodness — on the heavenly things of faith, as heretofore, under his guidance, upon the worldly things of knowledge ; that you may be as studious for proficiency in the spirit, as you were in his experience for skill in a strange tongue ; Heaven grant you but this one grace, you will have no need of any other.

While I was at the mineral waters, I had read a Swiss Guide-book, Eber's I think, where the pleasures of a pedestrian tour in the mountains are set forth in very glowing colors. The hint struck my fancy, my romance was kindled by it ; a walking I would go, somewhere or other, — to Switzerland if possible, but this, from considerations of time, could not be. Well, then, I would cross the mountains to Strasburg, on my way home to England. I saw no difficulty, I would hear of none ; and so on the day fixed for my departure I rode off to a little town called Remiremont, whence I had some nine or ten miles to my night's resting-place. I set out sturdily on foot, confident in my strength and spirits, but unluckily I stumbled on the threshold ; ere I had gone a league of my way an accident besell me that went near to put me out of humor with all such expeditions. I came upon a poor desolate village, and as I found that my spirits alone were not equal, as I had almost fancied that they might have been, to carry me through my day's work, I was fain to turn into a cabaret, where I began forthwith to tipple cider with mine host ; he was a gay, gossiping old fellow, with stories enough in his memory or his invention,

it mattered not which, to wear out any winter's evening. He was soon in his campaigns, but ere he could get very far into them I left him to himself and proceeded on my way. It was Sunday. The peasantry were assembled in a mass outside the village on a piece of waste along the road, amusing themselves with some outlandish game much like our nine-pins. I went quietly on without paying any attention to them, when just as I had passed I was struck on the back by a small stone evidently from some one of the party. I am now as sober as old Time, but then I was a hot youngster, — a *capellus*, —

“ *Litium et rixæ cupidus protervæ,
Non ego hoc ferrem calidus juventæ*,” &c.

My blood fired in a moment, my spirits flared fiercely up. I turned on my heel, and, walking up to my men, requested to know which of them had thrown the stone at me. The man whom I happened to address, as it seemed from his manner, knew nothing at all about it, he was not even aware of the occurrence, and staring at me with surprise, began to mimic my accent, instead of giving me any satisfaction. I saw, as I looked about me that I could discover nothing nor yet get any thing by my urgency ; I abandoned my purpose, and, turning back again in an extremity of spite and scorn, I applied to the whole set a term of infamy such as the spirit of a true man could never yet brook. They were up against me in a moment ; my spokesman, obviously meaning mischief, stooped to pick up his shying stick, and I on my part, that I might be beforehand with him, caught hold of a big stone, and just as he was rising to run at me, hurled it on him and struck him at the knee joint with most Homeric potency. He rolled over, whether from pain or apprehension of it I know not ; but the triumph was short ; immediately the whole troop of Philistines were upon me ; I would fain have tried a second

throw, bnt in stooping for the purpose, I was fairly overborne by the mob and laid ingloriously in the dust. They spared me, I rather think, the infliction of their sticks, but one of them, — O, for a fitting imprecation on him ! — seeing that I was still bent on mischief, gave my arm such a wrench as seemed to twist it in the socket, and was felt by me in its effects for months afterwards ; while a little urchin, the devil's imp I am sure, if I could but trace his genealogy, took up a handful of gravel from the road, and, flinging it into my face, tortured my eyes so horribly that I thought them perished altogether ; after this I never dreamed of any resistance, but was dragged back head and heels to the cabaret that I had just left, there, I suppose, to abide the censure of the *juge de paix*, or some such functionary. My good friend, the landlord, came out upon the uproar, and was surprised, as he well might, to see me brought back a prisoner of war, and in such piteous trim. He said every thing in my favor, — insisted that there must be some mistake, — and spoke of my courtesy and kindness in all terms of commendation. This told well for me, — so also did my sufferings, and it was settled finally that I should be set at liberty, and admonished to mend my manners for the future. This was done, and tenderly enough, all things considered ; but, as for me, I was dogged and spiteful, and pretending, even at the moment of grace, altogether to disregard them, instead of availing myself of my license, I called, as any chance wayfarer might have done, for some more cider. They informed me that I was at liberty to go, presuming that, as a foreigner, I might have mistaken them, but still I told them I did not want to go, I was very comfortable where I was ; all that I wanted was some more cider, and when I got that I should not care a straw for them. This sort of gracelessness irritated even their French good-temper ; they

left me and locked the door upon me, swearing that the next day justice should be done on such a *méchant*; that, thought I, as my good wit or ill fortune shall have the better of it. However, the door was closed, and the room given over to “darkness and to me.” I was left to make the best use of a hard table, a still harder bench, a vile stench of tobacco, and my own moody meditations. Night had already set in, and, after I had essayed vainly for an hour or two to compose myself into sleep, my landlord, to my great surprise, belike fearfully minded for his window’s sake, or dreading a battery of his walls, entered upon me in his night-shirt, and, motioning me out in dumb show, unfastened the lawful impediments of bar and bolt, and then commanding me to the fresh air, pointed out the road that I was to take with all emphasis of gesticulation, as though he were counselling me to flee for my life, and escape from before the avenger to the next city of refuge. I was doubtful to take issue; my senselessness half disposed me to stay and brave it out, but actually I did the wiser thing; in another hour I was out of danger, or at least in all possible security of it, sleeping lustily in the next village inn.

The next morning I was up early and again upon the road, in high force and spirits. If, indeed, I had taken my first adventure as an earnest of what was to come, there was not much in it to encourage me. Before I had been an hour on my expedition I had contrived to get pummelled, wrenched, and half-blinded. Here, then, was a standard of calculation; and, to compute the chances upon it, I might fairly conclude that ere I got to my journey’s end I should present in my honorable person a hospital of infirmities,—a complete synopsis of casualties. But the evil was over, and so was all my concern about it. I went forward with my hopes, and left my *experience to lag* behind me. In fact, at the rate

I went, I was not easily overtaken, — least of all by the old crone. I sweated along the road at a march of five miles an hour, urging, and goading, and flogging my limbs, till they were ready to drop under me. Like an unworthy laborer upon a piece of taskwork, — a hireling, to whom his day seems long, — I had no care of its success, I was anxious only to despatch it out of hand. My end was my sole object, whereas it should only have been the end of many intermediate and particular objects. I hurried myself out of calm into perturbation. I lost the considerate faculty, the eye, as Shakspeare tells us, of the soul. All this was the very extravagance of folly ; but it is a folly that foot-travellers of my then age, wayfarers, not for work but wantonness, commit almost of course. They are mere walking machines ; once in motion they must on, they have no power to stay themselves until their principle be spent, their moving power exhausted. They are a kind of watches, they are wound up, and click out their appointed time, till their force fails them, and then they stop necessarily ; and, when they stop, they are silent, they are sunk absolutely, — body, soul, and spirits ; in a word, way-foundered. Such a thing it is to make one's self a toil of one's pleasure. O, the blessedness of the consummation !

To say truth, we are sent abroad from this country much earlier than we should be. We despatch our raw striplings to the continent ere they well know themselves at home. Literally, we transport them, — for their sins, no doubt, — according to the sentence of the common law, the fashionable statute in that case made and provided. But this, in the poet's phrase, is a matter of more worth than should be dealt with traditionally after the wisdom of our forefathers, — a wisdom so often ending in its opposite, that is, in the fantastical folly of their sons. Seriously, the traveller must trade upon a large

capital, or he can never prosper. He must have all his faculties impromptu,—energy, decision, self-sufficiency,—the *savoir faire* and *savoir vivre* of our French neighbours ; else is his pleasure penance, his variety mere vanity and vexation of spirit. These pedestrian ventures particularly, of all others the most profitable as well as delightful, if rightly used, fail with us for the most part from our own insufficiency,—from the default of our very capacity for enjoyment. The mischief is deep-seated ; it is easy enough to trace it to its head, but very difficult to attack it there ; in fact, it belongs to the system, it runs through our whole discipline of life. The time chosen for such excursions is usually the long vacation of our collegiates ; this is the time, but not the right season ; at that age the mind is far indeed from being mature for such a purpose. The stripling of eighteen or twenty can hardly do otherwise than I did. To use old Falstaff's illustration, he will have the motion of a bullet,—he will speed straight on till he be spent, then fall absolutely. But now mark the difference ; a few years from my first date as a traveller, when I was confirmed in manhood and experience, I tried the same experiment, but in another way and with a far other success. I chose my country. I drew a narrow outline,—for it is best not to diffuse one's self illimitably,—but I filled it to the full. I formed no plan, at least not fixedly and inflexibly ; I left events to their course, one occasion to generate another,—in short, I indulged my genius, and gratefully did it pay me for the indulgence. I preferred the by-ways to the highways, the herbage to the dust, the cabaret to the regular inn, the market-cart to the diligence. Not a scene of any beauty but I dwelt upon it with the amorousness of the painter, till its loveliness had become a portion of my spirit, till my soul swam in its deliciousness ; not a meadow nor rivulet, nor so much as

a tree of any dignity, but I bestowed on it my contemplative leisure ; not a ruin, or castle, or old desolate mansion, but I abode there awhile in spirit as well as presence ; viewing and reviewing, gazing, admiring, and imagining, lingering over its aspect, as one minded to write its history in romance, — fain to imbue his spirit with the darkness of its shadow, and feed his meditation full with its forms of antiquity. In all things I studied nature, but chiefly in man. In the lone cottage, the farm-house, the half-tenanted chateau, I was wont to claim the privilege of the wayfarer, and seldom without my welcome ; scarce ever, indeed, for there is a charm in simple confidence, and the closest portal of the heart, the hardest disposition, is open to it. I gave them my good thanks and the story of my wanderings, and so was their hospitality requited. Even the merriment of the cabaret, its rustic revelry, its jovial carelessness, were to me sweet society. It is there, in the holyday of the heart, the confluence of warm spirits, that one gets the love of one's kind, that our worldly manliness is softened into the gentleness of genuine humanity. Of this the palaces of the great know nothing. It is the *sermo pedestris*, as Horace tells us, that best sets forth the sympathies of real life, and takes the dramatic character. That language we must learn, if we would know our kind, if we would be conversant with the natural man.

I was but little so conversant in this my earliest expedition, and yet it was principally for that purpose that I projected the plan originally. I had felt for years past what most "young gentlemen" are condemned to feel, — and a most painful condemnation it is, — to wit, a sense of feebleness, a lassitude, an universal atony. I wanted the working faculty, the practical sense and dexterity. I wondered frequently at the readiness in word, and address in act, of the laborer, the serving-man, the

"rude mechanical"; people whom I knew to be illiterate, and presumed therefore that they had no right to be as clever as myself. The observation was forced upon me everywhere, but the explanation of the fact as my judgment then stood was not quite so obvious. I take the true account of it to be this, — such people never dream of diffidence, at least they are not in the habit of dwelling upon the consciousness of it. They are sure of what they do; conversant with the things of practice, the results of their handicraft are certain, palpable, and substantial; they perplex themselves little, or not at all, with the vanities of speculation. Hence, they lose the habit of distrust. They either know a thing, or not, absolutely; if not, they have no concern with it, they are nowise doubtful about it. The consequence is, that their whole life is a discipline of energy and decision. They act boldly, and answer boldly, and speak out boldly; they are thoroughly self-assured. Whereas, my school-fellows and I had been educated comparatively in the shade; brought up among books, we had reversed the poor man's proportions of learning and of doing. We were perpetually engaged in what we understood, most of us, very imperfectly; struggling our way on in darkness and confusion; always more or less in a cloud; mystified — this I take it is the orthography — by the obscurity of our subjects. Hence uncertainty of mind, hesitation, discomfort, in thought, word, and act, — a deplorable lack of definitiveness. The difference between me and the greater part of my contemporaries was this, — they felt it only, and acquiesced; whereas, I was not content to be so oppressed. I felt it, and considered it, and endeavoured to redress it. I conferred as often as I had occasion with country people, laborers, and craftsmen. I meditated this pedestrian pilgrimage, I now at

length tried it ; but, for this time, without any judiciousness of trial, and therefore without any great success.

Nevertheless, I did not lose the occasion altogether, though I was far from making the most of it. Men and manners I marked occasionally, not speculatively nor in the masquerade of society, but in their homes, at their own hearths, in the looseness of their familiar habits, and the fulness of their hearts. Divers times in the dead heat of the day, — the *intempesta meridies*, — I solaced myself, not poetically under some sylvan umbrageousness, but in the cool, roomy comfort of an old cabaret, such as one sees them often abroad, ancient, vast, and solid, with nothing of modern style or stinginess ; built for many generations, as if the builder had been forewarned that his family was to stand and fall with his house ; that in fact his house and family, as in the old phraseology, were one and the same thing. There have I spent hours together, talking and listening, asking questions and answering them, to my own entertainment and that of a village company ; astounding their ears with the majesty of old England, dazzling their eyes with her glories, and telling them how her parsons were rich gentlemen, driving about in carriages and keeping lackeys in livery, marrying and giving in marriage, leaders, in short, of the provincial fashion, or at least its very forward followers. Moreover, how our squires were great seigniors, our lords princes, and our very cultivators of the soil, not as with them, a set of hardworn starvelings, but for the most part men of good substance in purse as well as person, clothed, fed, and lodged like their own wealthiest burghers, faring of the best, and holding up their heads almost to the level of gentlemen ; all this might have passed with them, except my story of the parsons ; that spoiled all, and leavened the whole mass ; it was something too monstrous for them to swallow, a very camel in

their throats. They conceived evidently, and not unreasonably either, that I was abusing the license of a traveller ; it passed their faith that a nation, such as I described England to be, powerful, intelligent, and Christian, could be brought even for a single day to abide such a mockery of the gospel by its professed ministers. In their simplicity they disbelieved it ; I wish that I could do the same.

But to proceed with the course of my rustic companionship ; I had not tact, nor quickness, nor address enough to make myself always accessible in such societies, but, whenever I could take their tone, I was delighted with the warmth, and frankness, and intelligence that I found everywhere. I hardly ever went out of a French cabaret without feeling that I had left the spirit of joyousness behind me. They are no drivellers over the bottle ; they have a sufficient taste of such indulgences, but with them the taste is a harmless one. The good qualities of the Frenchman are generally brought out by liquor, whereas the Englishman, for the most part, while under that kind of influence shows his worst points only ; but the French are courteous in their cups, — social, genial, and jovial, — and yet not otherwise than respectful.

I found that this sort of communication inspirited me marvellously, that it warmed and quickened my intellect ; I ought therefore to have cultivated it much more than I did, though I was far from neglecting it altogether. I remember well that I earned one day a nice, savory mess of pottage — earned it, ay, in faith, and that right earnestly — by an hour's hard work in cutting billets with a woodman ; once or twice I even tried my hand at harvest work, — any thing for use, amusement, and experience, — though this last service was too hot for me, — I was soon obliged to give it over. But my great

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friends were the priests, the village *curés*. By the by, how strange it is that with us, as among them, the idea of a Christian minister should be expressed by a word signifying a person of whom care is taken, and not one who takes care of others,—curate instead of curator; though, to be sure, in our actual sense of it, the phrase is too often german to the matter; truer than a better etymology would make it. But these good French priests, how kind, and friendly, and courteous to me they always were! So much so, that, after some experience of their disposition, I never failed to talk with them as often as I had occasion. Repeatedly they asked me to their homes, gave me of their best, treated me as a father might treat his child, and dismissed me blessed and blessing, refreshed by the heavenly refreshment of their good offices; not a word of offence about religion, nothing that betrayed on their part the slightest wish to impose upon my unguardedness, to lead my ignorance astray, to make me a convert to their faith from that of my own fathers. So much was I interested in them that I took special pains to make inquiries about them; everywhere the same good report, one consenting attestation of their zeal, their earnestness, their grace, their charity, their activity in good works; and yet they are paid most humbly; but then they have withal a humble spirit, a spirit suited to their fortunes, and, what is more important still, to their faith and their professions; these are the true laborers in the Lord's vineyard, the men who are reviving throughout France, by the sincerity of their example, the spirit of that religion so long dishonored and discredited by the hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness of their selfish, pampered predecessors. I could not but contrast their conduct with that of our own clergy,—alas, the contrast!

It was by one of those priests that the sources of

true Christian feeling, the peculiar fruits, were first opened in me ; before that time I had never once thought nor cared about the reasons of my profession, the holy mysteries of our religion. I regarded it only in its forms ; in other words, I regarded not the essence at all. But one morning this good man, who had taken me into his house as a wayfarer from a far country, and there treated me hospitably, expounded to me the doctrine of the atonement so feelingly, so vitally, as to bring tears into my eyes ; this was the more remarkable as the sentiment belonged not to the locality. This may seem nonsense, but I will endeavour to explain it. In general, I think mountain scenery, and the religious thoughts suggested by it, tend rather to deism ; I have observed that bias in divers of my own friends, passionate lovers of whatever is magnificent in nature. When we contemplate such works, the idea of their great worker, of the universal God the Father, is impressed upon us so powerfully, that we would fain acquiesce, though we would go no further. The religion of the Creator is apt to suspend, and overpower, and banish that of the Saviour.

At last, to make a short story of it, a "*longæ finis chartæque viæque*," I got to Strasburg. I have spoken of my religious impressions on my journey, and I will now say a word upon some others of a very different kind. The country between Colmar and Strasburg, and indeed almost all the country that I traversed, the absence of great properties and great houses, the cheerfulness, independence, and hospitality of its cottage laborers, their dwelling-places, uncouth, it is true, but roomy, substantial, and comfortable, their plentiful though coarse diet, — the view and experience of all this leads one naturally to wonder what can be the use of titles, dignities, and *principalities* ; why in other countries, and especially our

own, so little provision has been made for the greatest happiness of the greatest number ; I mean so far as government can deal with such a subject, through its laws of property and various other methods. In short, these considerations carry one towards republicanism, if not right up to it, or even beyond it. No reflecting man can travel through such countries as Switzerland, Flanders, and many parts of France, but the truth will force itself upon him ; sooth to say, my observation so operated upon me ; but as this has little to do with the frame of intellect, except so far as what I have said before is true, namely, that decided political principles give decisiveness to the whole character, I shall waive the further mention of it. To grow then to my point, I found myself once more in Cambridge. I determined to carry my projects into act, and as I knew well that it was easier to be a very ascetic, to forbear altogether, than to be moderate in my pleasures, I forswore from the time of my return all *custom* of society ; I settled upon my books, — an ominous expression, ominous in too many cases of the Scriptural sense of a man's settling upon his lees. The effect is frequently the same, — by metaphrase from the spirit of man to that of wine, from the blood of the grape to the humor of our own veins. I say that I forswore the custom, but not the occasional use. To give a fillip, as it were, to my course, I went from time to time into society ; retained my interest in the turf ; rode attendance to Newmarket ; I shot, boated, played cards, and occasionally, in wine and other things, relaxed myself into the very looseness of indulgence. But these were mere starts from my regularity. In the main I gave myself over to my books, — I was a reading man. One would suppose that in all this there could be nothing else but profit ; not so ; the balance of loss and gain was, on the whole, rather nicely adjusted. Certainly the course was a thrifty

one ; I saved money by it, redeemed myself from the consequences of my extravagance, and this was a great point gained ; for it was scarcely possible that the intellect should run smooth and clear while it is liable at every point to be chased, ruffled, and irritated by the snags, I think the Americans call them, of worldly difficulties and distresses. So far, then, I did well. Again, I laid up a good store of learning in my mind ; I acquired, what is better still, the habit of industry and application ; I weaned myself from the soft bosom of idleness, the lap of luxury ; with this, also, I was right content, and with good reason. But then comes the catalogue of disadvantages, — the debit side of the account.

Youth is not formed for solitude. Here and there, indeed, the shades should be thrown in over the picture, but merely to set off the lights, to heighten their effect, and bring them out in more brilliance of relief. The mind is too feeble at that time to support itself alone ; if it lean not on something else, it has hardly strength enough to carry its own weight, much less to go forward to any purpose. The meditative faculty either does not exist at all, or, at best, is but very imperfect. A continued stretch of thought is almost invariably a strain upon it, often an excruciating agony ; and even fancy — the sweet must, the new wine, which works itself through a series of processes into a liquor of price, a noble crystal clearness, if we take in its first state, before it has undergone these processes — palls and becomes loathsome to us. It is a kind of sensual pleasure ; relaxation follows close upon its enjoyment. The spider is a lonely creature ; there it sits darkly in its corner, concocting all its juices into venom, and spinning its web out of itself, maze upon maze, perplexity upon perplexity ; such is professed solitude. But we, in our young days, should rather imitate the bee, and *fly abroad* early for our honey, leaving it to

aftertime to qualify and dispose it, and frame cells for its reception. Then, indeed, when our life is verging to its decline, it may be pleasant, as the poet tells us, —

“ From the loopholes of retreat
To look upon the world, to hear the sound
Of the great Babel, and not feel its stir.”

But this is the prerogative of manhood, — of firm, experienced, self-sufficing manhood. Our later age, to make a fresh illustration of a very stale passage, —

“ Validis radicibus hærens
Pondere fixa suo est, nudosque sub aere ramos
Ostendens, truncu non frondibus efficit umbram.”

But the sapling, so far from giving shelter to others, requires it for itself ; requires it in society, comfort, and sympathy ; all these I denied myself, not absolutely, but *sub modo*. However, the measure was an insufficient one. By my own act I had interrupted the sources whence my spirits should have been recruited. The mischief was soon manifested ; I began to sicken, pine, and dwindle into puniness, and yet I persisted still. Unhappily, solitariness, like most other diseases, if it be not checked early, grows into strength, and aggravates itself at length beyond all hope of resistance. It was thus in my case ; the shadow continued to increase upon me. I found, indeed, that to labor in that way was to profit little ; the weight that I took into my head seemed to lose itself there, and to rest solely upon my heart. But I was obstinate in my perseverance ; fancying, with Sangrado, that if my practice failed it was only because I had not carried it out far enough — omitting to develope the principle fully. Hence, to make my system sure, and preclude all interference with it, I determined to depend upon myself only, even for my recreation, and to take all my exercise alone. This I did, and, with the occasional exceptions that I have mentioned, I made every day of

my life a piece of mechanical drudgery ; I became possessed with the demon of solitude. Unless one has a most glorious object to sustain one, the spirit must sink infallibly under such a discipline ; in mine, at least, there was not buoyancy enough to support it. Often, after long hours of labor, when I raised my eyes from my book only to gaze upon my blank walls, and feel the reflection of their dreariness fall upon me and strike me as it were inwardly, the sad question, the importunate "*quorsum haec*," would suggest itself to my conscience ; I fancied that I might be grasping at a shadow, disquieting myself after all about a vain show. The darkness of my mood was aggravated by the merriment of my thoughtless collegiates. I read without discretion, and therefore my much reading was a weariness of the flesh ; in the phrase of Scripture, I was overwise ; but it was only in the wisdom of the pedant, and so, to carry that phrase out, I was destroying myself.

On the whole, then, my prospect was an ill one, it was "odds beyond arithmetic" against me ; but I was better befriended than by my own industry, and talent, and discretion ; I got at last something more than disappointment for my long months of labor. My competitors, it should seem, had read with as little reflection, and to as little or less purpose, than myself. By their weakness, rather than by my own strength, I was successful, not with any brilliancy of success, but yet to the full height of my ambition and expectation. Here, then, I had found a resting-place, —

"Inveni portum, spes et Fortuna valete."

My lines were laid out for me in pleasant places, in a land overflowing with milk and honey ; here, if I were so minded, in the language of old Bunyan, I might pitch my tent, set up my staff, and eat, drink, and sleep out the remainder of *my days*. But human cupidity is insatiable.

From the effect of some strange perversity, I could not well content myself to live like a sheep, and die of the fat rot. The point that I had now attained, so long as it was in prospect, had been the pinnacle of my highest hopes ; at present I regarded it as nothing more than a kind of Pisgah,—a vantage-ground whence I might survey and conquer by anticipation the regions yet before me. Such is nature ; present success is valued but as a stepping-stone to that beyond it ; Alps beyond Alps. I had hardly achieved myfeat when I began to think, with the hero of the *Odyssey*,—

“ So far so well, the doubtfulfeat is done,
Now forward, to essay a further one.”

What this further one was to be I knew not, but I had leisure enough, and I employed it to take breath and look about me for an issue.

In the first place, bethinking me of the *versate diu* of Horace, I endeavoured to find what I was worth ; to make an estimate of my powers ; to analyze the elements of my composition. My method was no such bad one. I took the range of my acquaintance, and compared myself line by line with such of them as happened, each in his own way, to be more or less distinguished. This was a severe trial, and the result also was a severe infliction to my self-love, a most sore stroke ; I came off but limpingly ; I was wanting at all points. There I stood confessed, and self-confessed, in spite of my anxiety to disguise the truth, a very poor creature. As I have said above, in my worldly views I had been successful, I had made a good haul, I had caught my fish, and accordingly I was minded, not unreasonably all things considered, to put my net out of hand ; to lay up for a while my classical and mathematical perplexities. As a substitute, I resumed my habits of society, but, unluckily, they had been so long disused that they were something of the awkwardest.

It is true that I had the elements within me ; the principles of reading, writing, talking, and, in a degree, of public speaking, I had known and practised ; but *fuitus* was my word. I had practised them neither long nor continually ; I had just broken ground and then left my work, leaving behind me, not a fair, even channel, but heaps of unsightliness, rude cavities, in short the deformity of a crude, rough, half-finished experiment. All this I saw to the dismay of my soul, the very agony of my conscience.

What I most wanted was the spirit of cheerfulness, of easy, assured cheerfulness, the flow of conversation, the tone of society ; not that the principle itself was lacking, I had a natural genuine source of cheerfulness within me ; but it lay deep, it was liable to be obstructed, like a field-drain by thorns and furze-bushes, by the anxiety to excel, and the unquiet presage—a presage for the future drawn but too directly from the past—that I might chance to fail. Otherwise, when the channel was clear, the stream was clear also ; when I was conversant with my familiars, on friendly grounds, and therefore off my guard, I used to be well enough ; but in ordinary society those said thorns would choke me ; my learning would overlay me with ancient rubbish, my ambition would overleap itself and fall to the ground flatly, if not ludicrously. My success, such as it was, had acquired me a reputation, and the rule that is laid down by those shrewd files, Tacitus and Machiavel, with respect to usurpers, namely, that they should maintain and enforce their government by the means wherewith they first acquired it,—this said political rule I chose to apply intellectually. I had got my reputation by learning, and by learning I would make it good, verifying old Hesiod's verse,—that fame is an ill thing, easy enough to raise up, but very hard to carry. I came out, like any solemn, foolish owl, in my pedantic

mock-majesty, so awkwardly, and yet so affectedly, that there was not a twittering little bird of them all that could flutter and skim the air but had good right and reason to make mirth of me.

Not but that learning has its uses, if they be only understood, even in the lightest conversation. It is a maxim of the Schoolmen that no element is heavy in its own proper place ; and where an illustration is brought unexpectedly, unconstrainedly, and as it were by sleight of hand, from the depths to the surface, nothing is more charming ; there is no such forcible spell in all the witchery of conversation. Geometricalians in some cases refer their superficial lines to the centre of the earth. Foundations lie deep ; it is not always mud that we bring up by probing to the bottom ; things of transparent truth, of perfect configuration, very bubbles for lightness, and elegance, and brilliancy, may be brought to the surface of the water from many fathoms' depth.

Nevertheless, what my Lord Coke has said of his legal lore is as true of all learning whatever, that it is like water in a deep well, — it requires a powerful faculty, much strength, and much dexterity to make it available ; this I had not, and, consequently, like an awkward cudgel-player, I did not so much wield my weapon as labor it ; all the flourishes that I could exhibit were rather to the danger of my own head and confusion of my brains, than to any other purpose. Still I was not content to listen. Where I could say nothing well, I would always be saying something ; not for the subject's sake or that of good companionship, but merely for the sake of my own vanity, retailing my far-fetched trumpery, dealing in silly subtleties of distinction, darkening knowledge by words, that I might the better show off certain blue lights of my own ; —

“ For darkness is the proper sphere
Where all false glories do appear.”

However superficial the subject, the question, *quid causas petis ex alio*, might have been retorted upon me perpetually by any one who could read and remember Latin ; in short, if I recollect myself aright, I was an absolute nuisance ; I had power enough of irksomeness to put whole societies to flight with my ass's jaw.

But in this point of view I have given my portraiture elsewhere, and at full length ; I will not repeat any thing so nauseous ; it is enough to say, that, for the most part, when I went into society, I made a fool of myself, — literally made myself so by my own laborious endeavours. It was not till I was alone that I came to myself again, that I was conscious of my folly and repented it bitterly, in the very gall of self-despite.

This is a sad story, but it has little or nothing peculiar to me. The ill-humors that I have described were the scum of my first workings ; they are common to all half-fermented intellects. Lord Chesterfield himself, that mirror of perfect polish, in one of his letters to his son, charges his own youthful disposition with the same sickening affectation and pedantry. Like him I was brought at last to see the excess of my absurdity, and set myself to cure it ; cure it, did I say ? no, to cut it off absolutely.

But this was not all, nor yet even the worst of my infirmities. I was in a condition of general moral debility ; my growth in learning had produced the same effect upon my mind as the growth of stature produces frequently upon the body ; it had left me in looseness and in lassitude. In short, my whole head was sick, and my whole heart faint. I wanted a method of life, a leading principle, a main spring of action. I felt more and more every day that my learning was a mere load upon me, a mass of unhealthy stagnation, unless I could contrive for it some determinate issue, a direct, definite channel,

one or more, to carry off its superfluity, and keep it continually in a running stream. For this there was but one method, — the faculty of thinking, the general, habitual faculty ; the moral steam-engine that forces the waste waters away from us through their appointed ducts and channels. Professional men and men of business have a substitute for this faculty in the continual impulse from without, the claims of their calling upon their attention. The merest fool, so long as his mind is thus employed, is happier, for the most part, to take the sum of his life's happiness, than the recluse philosopher. His happiness is higher in amount, though it may be lower in kind and quality. He is confined within a small circle ; he is prevented from losing himself in the vastness of inanity. If you would preserve any essential spirit you must keep it up closely, stop it in small space. This is the happiness of occupation. But for men who are unoccupied, I mean regularly and necessarily, who have many things that they may think of, but none at all that they must, as the outward impulse fails them they have so much the greater need of the inward motive, — the elastic faculty of the mind, the power of thought. I was myself in this category, and I felt the want grievously, but how should I supply it ?

Just before this, in the course of my promiscuous reading, I had seen a sentence from Lord Bacon, where that really great philosopher declares his opinion to be, that if a man, when he had arrived at the use of reason and reflection, were to take his mind, as it were, to pieces, break up his whole mass of knowledge, and begin like a little child to learn all anew, and take nothing for granted, such a man would probably raise his intellect to a greater height and excellence than the greatest of our race has yet been able to attain. The authority was *high* ; consequently the opinion struck me, — the glori-

ous prospect presented to me filled and expanded my whole heart. I took Bacon for my guide ; I knew enough of my own mental constitution to see that it was very indifferently put together. There could be no loss, then, from the trial, — *Fiat experimentum in corpore vili.* I was anxious to analyze it into its first principles ; not merely to reform it, but to reframe it altogether. I well remember the moment when the thought occurred to me ; it was a fine evening in September ; some young friends had been “wining” in my rooms, and had just left me ; I was sitting at my window looking out on the rich scene before me in that mood of richly tinted meditation, that warm yet deep sunset tone, such as will sometimes gleam over us when our joyousness is sunk below the horizon, when the full light of society is relapsing, with a gentle adumbration, into the shade of solitude. Repeatedly during the day I had been considering those words of Bacon. Just then they recurred to me in all their force ; I looked around me, and overhead, on the magnificence of nature ; I saw that every thing else was perfect in its development, and that only my uses were unfulfilled. Heaven forgive me for it. It has been so too long already, — but henceforth, so I said inwardly, I will at least endeavour that I may be less unworthy to live among such glories.

I gave myself a day’s leisure to compose me for the effort, and then went to work in earnest. First I had to examine myself thoroughly, — to take an account of my stock, to estimate what I could really call my own. This was but an unsatisfactory task, — in the process, at least, whatever it might be in the results. I found that I was a medley of imperfections, a mere bundle of infirmities, — every thing begun, and nothing well finished. As for my previous methods of improvement, I was much in the condition of a man who finds, when he is far

engaged in a complicated design, that the further he carries it the more he perplexes it, and only because he was not at first sure of his principles. For my actual achievements, they amounted to nothing more than the collection of a quantity of raw material, a heap of book-learning. Still it was evident that the “*nitus formativus*” had been at work, and that, through my whole mass, divers prominences there were, promising bumps in my composition, that portended something, doubtless, although the protrusive force had not as yet wrought upon them sufficiently, — had been unable to develope, and magnify, and exalt them into horns of strength. Here, then, was a wide field before me, — a kind of phrenological map. The only question was, where I should begin, what province of that vast region I should first essay to subjugate. This was somewhat difficult to decide, much as I had to do, and small as my power of doing then seemed to me. However, by some means or other, I came to the right conclusion; I lacked much, but I knew that I lacked one thing chiefly, to wit, energy; and this is the great principle, the spring that sets the whole machinery in movement; the antagonist of Time, acted upon by him as a wheel is by a stream, only to be set at work, and so to achieve great ends, where the feebleness of an ordinary mind would have been swept away and carried downwards to perdition. I knew that all the time that I had lost — the days, months, and years — were gone from me, now and ever, mainly from the default of this principle; that its absence was invariably supplied by listlessness, weariness, self-annoyance, and the whole nervous host. It was here, therefore, that I made my first point; I began wisely. It is true that I wanted this same energy for great purposes, but I saw that my only hope was to try it first in smaller ones, to exercise it in things within the power even of my own feebleness. The

thought was a good one, and I entertained it according to its deserts. I became energetic in small matters ; I took care of the pence, knowing well that the pounds would take care of themselves. All that I did I studied to do promptly, and briskly, and decisively ; whether it were to greet a friend, to give orders to a dependent, to walk, or talk, or read a newspaper, if it were only to pour out a cup of tea, to use a shoeing-horn, to shut or open a door, still I went smartly to my work ; I was active and animated in all things. Whatever my hand found to do I did it, as the holy proverb recommends us, with all my might. If the edge were blunt, I put to the greater strength. When I felt the spirit of remissness stealing upon me, I stirred my faculties against it, I would not suffer myself to languish. But even here I proceeded by degrees. At first I found it necessary to humor the perverseness of undisciplined nature. I proposed half an hour's energy. For so long, at least, I will have my wits about me ; I will be quick, active, and spirited, to the minutest thing that I undertake. This was a pious fraud. A most happy delusion ; activity propagates itself ; the beginning begets the end ; the spirit of the first minute is extended to the second ; electricity is carried along the chain from link to link, the dawn steals into the day, and success is at last made sure. I promised for half an hour and performed — no, executed rather, — performance is a spiritless word — through the whole day. O, that the thousands and hundreds of thousands whose lives drag heavily on, heavily and still heavily, through the loose, dry sand of their worldly ways, would thus stir themselves into interest ! would imitate my example, if only for one day ! I require no more of them. Surely it should be their happiness. So would the spirit be sovereign, and prevail over the flesh instead of being buried in it.

I had thus acquired an energy of will, a primary moving power ; the only question was, whether this energy of will could support itself for a continuance, and so pass into energy of action ; it might be doubted whether I had a sufficient fund of spirits and force of character for the purpose. Happily, I was in a great degree fortified against the danger of relapse,—I was observant and reflective. Consequently I knew the value of my acquisition, and was anxious to maintain it. The difficulty was less every day, and the success greater. Interruptions I had occasionally, moments of weariness, hours of despondency ; but the remedy was always in my power ; I knew whenever my spirit was weighed down that the depression was but imaginary, real, it is true, in itself, but originating in fancy. I knew, also, that I had only to make an effort, to rise from my supineness, and bestir myself vigorously in any way that occurred to me,—in reading, talking, or thinking, the first perhaps most usually ; and, if I could only bring myself to be active in any one of these employments, the dark, towering cloud would forthwith end, like that of the Arabian Tales, in a genius of light.

It is this energy of will that is the soul of the intellect ; wherever it is, there is life ; where it is not, all is dulness, and despondency, and desolation. People who have no experience of it imagine that it is destructive to the nerves, exhaustive of the animal spirits ; that it aggravates the wear and tear of life excessively. But this is an idle notion, as idle as the habits and humors of those who entertain it. I leave it to any man who knows its real effect to strike the balance,—to compare the exhaustion of an indolent day with that of an active one ; to say in which of the two cases the subject is in better heart for work, and fitter to undergo it. Whatever we may be about, one thing, I believe, is certain, that, if the

spirits are spent by energy they are utterly wasted by idleness ; at worst, energy can only end in relaxation, it is superior to it for a while, and possibly at last may fall into it ; whereas idleness is actually relaxation from first to last, and can be nothing else. But even this view, favorable as it is, is yet not favorable enough to be just. The fact is, that violence is not necessary to energy any more than tyranny is to kingship ; on the contrary, it is the gentlest energy that does the most work. Energy, literally from the Greek, is inward-workingness ; the blooming of the flower is energy, the increase of fruit is energy, the growth of the body is energy ; yet in all these there is no violence ; the efficacy is not destructive but vital ; without it the whole frame must fall at once into corruption ; with it, instead of corruption we have life. But this, it may be said, is a refinement. It may be so, but it is true in fact nevertheless. The gainsayer will find it difficult to produce any thing from the subject of surer or more essential truth.

On the whole, then, though with sundry breaks, and lapses, and vacillations, I practised energy successfully, — I wrought out my redemption from indolence. And first of all I carried it into small matters, I laid my foundations low. Out of my heaviness and indifference I spirited myself into a briskness of manner and of action. This is the rudiment of the whole system ; and it is within the scope of every man, even of the veriest fool or child ; any one who lives unsatisfactorily from the default of it, as all must live who are without it, is not more pitiable than contemptible.

Next I employed it in the furtherance of my old process of reading. I used to regard the different methods of improvement, such as reading, writing, and all the rest, as distinct and independent ; each subsisting by itself, and working by its own agency. But I now found

that I had been mistaken ; all these methods are merely the different channels wherein our energy should run its course, the instruments wherewith it works, the limbs and outward faculties, itself being the soul of them all, their prime mover. Accordingly I threw this soul into the body of my reading ; I read,—and this is what I would counsel others to do, if they would read to any purpose, I mean in the way of study, and for service of the intellect,—I read intently, beginning every sentence smartly, and finishing it in a breath ; remitting my stress upon it gradually towards the end ; then collecting myself for the next by a new effort, an effort of the breath only and not of the voice necessarily, and so on, proceeding through the book. One can hardly enter upon such details, and not appear ridiculous ; one may command one's own gravity, but scarcely that of one's readers. Well, let the scoffers enjoy themselves. They may have their laugh, as I have had my use and advantage. Any one else who pleases may mediate between us,—try, prove, and consider,—and then take his party as he will, and range himself accordingly.

This was an old practice with me, as old as my first volume ; aged into oblivion, and so back again into novelty ; therefore, to speak as an epigrammatist, doubly new. But the first principle of my plan was to reframe myself ; to practise thoroughly what I had before practised but imperfectly, and thence only half successfully. I found the method a most satisfactory one ; by its use I could master any book that I might take up — any one, that is, of serious import — in less than half my ordinary time, and with an advantage, an impressiveness, a sufficiency, infinitely multiplied. Moreover, I felt, as I had done before, that my mind, my spirits generally, when once they were put in course, would flow on, after the impelling cause had ceased, with a continued vigor and liveliness ;

nature has so ordained it, not in this only, but in all things. Strike a hoop smartly, and it will sustain itself, and hold its course on, while the effect of the stroke lasts, and long after it was given. I remember to have been told by a friend, that he could never get the knocker of a door to speak in a tone of due dignity ; he wondered how this should be, — how brass in his especial hands should have lost all its brazen quality, — till at last he discovered that he was too feeble in the onset ; that his first stroke was futile, and that all the subsequent ones, as like engenders like, were of the same deplorable insignificance.

Next to this, or, I should say, concurrently with it, as there is a close relation between the two, I endeavoured to carry the same spirit into my conversation, to quicken my talking faculty with it. It is worth while to pause a minute or two upon the consideration of this project. It has been commonly believed, I know, that there is actually no such thing as an art of conversation ; that it is a quality, an especial property, and not an art ; a thing impossible to be taught any more than the use of one's eyes or other senses. In short, the notion seems to prevail that all rules upon this matter are the mere symbols, the express lineaments and features, of quackery. To be candid, though I cannot think that there is any good reason for the opinion, I will admit at once that there is a very fair pretext for the prejudice. If we were to take our experience for our reason, we should have small hope. Were we to judge of the prospect by the retrospect, it must be a mere blank. The so-called "arts of conversation" that have been written abroad by scores, and translated, some of them, into English, are begotten by pedantry upon affectation, conceited, formal productions, odious even to sickening. The subject has been vilely treated ; handled, and mouthed, and bedaubed most *insufferably* ; but I cannot, therefore, conclude that

it is altogether “*inops consilii*.” However, I shall make a short lesson of it ; I shall bring all my rules — the rules of my experience, and not merely of my scholarlike speculation — into a single point. Be careful that you never omit your energy ; this is the life of dialogue. The truth is, that there is an association not only of ideas, but also of sentiments and sensations. This last, as far as my observation reaches, has never been brought into a system, nor ever studied, or even regarded ; though, as a principle of action, it is scarcely less powerful than the former one. To give an instance or two. No one ever expects to hear any thing pointed or forcible from a person lying on a sofa, or lounging on an arm-chair. From the natural association of feelings it cannot be ; his physical relaxation extends itself to his spirit, and thence to his whole intellect ; his ideas flow but languidly, his energy is extinct. One might multiply examples without end, but a single one suffices. It follows, that, if we would enjoy society, or, in other words, conversation, for it comes to the same thing, we must keep our energies at work ; not indeed violently, nor even vehemently, for that would destroy all, but gently and movingly. We must eschew all listlessness ; keep our attention up, but never overstrain it ; labor nothing, say nothing, but what presents itself in course and without an effort. And lastly, as they say of a horse, keep our faculties in hand, to be holden in, or let out, at our discretion ; and never, from excitement or eagerness, so overreach ourselves as to lose our self-control and be thrown off the right balance.

For years before this I had fallen into a low, drawling, lazy tone of voice in my ordinary conversation ; my utterance came forth in a cloud, and had its dwelling there. From divers experiments and observations I had assured myself long ago that this was a capital defect, but my as-

surance as yet had been very far from working out its success. I had never had the energy to improve my observations into a method, and avail myself fully of their service. Now, at last, I attempted it in good earnest ; I studied to bring myself up again from my relapse, to acquire a rapid, distinct, and articulate delivery ; no man can miss this acquisition unless from some organic infirmity, provided only that he pursue it steadily and earnestly. This I had the good sense to do ; I lowered myself to the humility of the little child, and learnt from the first rudiments. I employed all the means that I have before described as exercises for the voice ; — recitation, — the frequent repetition of the same passages, slowly at first, and then more and more quickly up to my highest pitch of rapidity ; the pronunciation of foreign languages, Greek for the sake of fulness of the “*os rotundum*,” and French for that of distinctness and despatch. There are, I believe, some other methods I practised industriously, and I wanted none else for my success. I was at once sensible of this advantage ; — from a feeble, imperfect voice, muffled, or, as the French express it, veiled, to the obscuration and confusion of all features, I became comparatively, though not perhaps absolutely, a clear and satisfactory speaker ; and, as my talk was more distinct, my thoughts were all the more pointed and precise. Here is the association of sentiment, or rather, for the idea has no word in English, of pathos, in the Greek sense, — subjective association, as the German metaphysicians would call it. The energy that is called to action in the tongue extends itself to the thoughts, like a circle in water, beginning at a point and spreading over the whole surface. In these cases it is not the intellect that first raises itself from prostration, and then quickens the utterance ; on the contrary, we rise from the lowest end ; we articulate a sentence or two with energy ; this is easily

done, and, once in motion, the impulse once fairly given, it is easy to go on. We blow our fire into a blaze, we kindle our intellect by the influence of our breath, of our own active spirit.

Such is the effect of enunciation. If the delivery be difficult, if, when it is brought to the birth, there be no strength to bring it forth, then is the life endangered ; the very spirit of the sentence is stifled, and falls back again into nothingness. I had long been subject to this danger, but I was now generally superior to it ; my mind walked freely and easily in its new method. I acquired an evenness of tone, a confidence, a complacency ; my conversation, as the French say of their language, went of itself ; I was not distracted by the perpetual care and difficulty of supporting it step by step ; I had leisure to look chiefly to my direction, to march on to my object.

In the course of a few months I found myself mightily improved by these various forms of discipline. Previously my learning had been a load to me rather than an instrument of strength ; I used to carry it about with me, as one may see a poor crazy woman trailing after her an old-fashioned, tawdry cloak, or other piece of trumpery, feeling its incumbrance, but fancying all the while that it makes a fine show and supports the dignity of her appearance. I was carrying weight, and consequently, when I went into society, I could never go the pace of my light-headed and light-hearted companions. With all this I was sensitive to an extreme on the point of reputation, jealous as a Spaniard of my credit ; the more so as I knew it, in my inmost conscience, to be of very suspicious quality, — one that could never bide the assay. We are charest in general of what we have most in jeopardy, and so it was with me and my gratuitous reputation for talent. If ever I committed myself, and that was often enough, — if I said a foolish thing, or was con-

victed of an absurd opinion,—I was on the fret for days after, my whole mind was in a fever. I had an idea that learning was a kind of sacred thing, that there was something oracular about it ; it was not to be handled practically, nor scrutinized too narrowly ; that it was enthroned in a halo of obscurity, like that which is said to encircle the brow of kings, and that every attempt to break in upon it was *lèse-majesté*, — treason at the very least. Once, I remember it well, in a crowded college-hall, I got into a discussion with a shrewd, quick-witted fellow,—a farmer, I believe, from the North. The question was about the price of labor ; he treated it like a man of business, and I like a pedantic sciolist. My head was swarming with theories—I was fresh, I might have said raw—from Ricardo, Macculloch, and a host of them, and a precious mess I made of their speculations ; my colloquist, nevertheless, listened to me much longer than I deserved, till at last, when my battery of hard words had worked itself to a pause, —“ Ay, Sir,” he remarked very quietly, “ these are book-notions, and they may do very well in books, I dare say. Your business is with books, Sir, and mine is with the world ; and it ’s no use to talk learning to me, else you are soon out of my depth, Sir, and your own, too, if I may say it without offence. No, Sir, depend upon it, by the time you have lived a little longer in the world you will be all the wiser of it.” This was the substance of his say, only that he hacked with a blunt edge, and therefore the more painfully. I was cut to the very quick,—confused, silenced, and put to shame. My dinner was spoiled, and so likewise was my digestion. For months afterwards, I could never think of the old farmer but I felt the bile rising to my palate.

CHAPTER XII.

“ And in his brain,
Which is as dry as the remainder biscuit
After a voyage, he hath strange places crammed
With observation, the which he vents
In mangled forms.” — JACQUES.

BUT I was now released from my purgatory. I had won my way out, I began to feel my faculties, I had exercised them into usefulness ; I was conversant in society, as one belonging to it, not as if I had fallen into it from a region of cloudiness, nor like a spirit, as Pope has imagined one, imprisoned for long ages in a folio and just escaped from it. I had acquired a certain decision in act, word, and manner, the first and most precious fruit of intellectual manhood. I was now on a level with other men ; I had a firm footing in society, but I lacked the one great thing needful, — the power of thought, the essence of the intellect. It is true I was no longer such a fool as to go about like the priests in some Roman Catholic cathedrals, rattling the dry bones of the ancients, and fancying that they had a high spiritual efficacy, that they would serve me for strength and sinews of my own. I had outgrown this absurdity ; I had repudiated the second-hand faculty as vain, cumbrous, and delusive, but as yet I was unable to supply it with the real one, with the genuine originative force, the self-impelling energy, described by the old philosophers as the peculiar attribute of the soul, distinguishing it from all other essences. Here was my default ; I required some impulse from without to set my mind in motion. I had no such source within me as could supply a continuous stream ; or, if I had, there was *no channel prepared for it* ; hence I was but a driveller at

composition ; composition in the vulgar sense of the word, for as to its proper genuine sense I could compose well enough. I could put ideas together when I had got them. I could write formal sentences, stuffed with antecedents and relatives, with whos and whiches, — things that should be exorcised without mercy. But I was unable to wield a subject,— to work it, with all its machinery, promptly, easily, and effectively ; this is the ministry of thought. I had yet to learn it, bât I presumed that it would present itself in due course, and in the mean time I set myself to take in, as the Germans call it, a few of the neighbouring outposts and points of strength, as subsidiary to the grand siege.

And first I determined to write a diary ; to trace out my daily life, to mark acts and occurrences, and, withal, as far as might be, thoughts, sentiments, and wishes, by the magic configuration, the real fairy mazes, of the twenty-four letters. Heavens ! what an astounding process ! O, wonderful, that, from things so puny, such strength should be ordained ! Surely, the Divinity must have generated it, otherwise the soul of man could never have had the capacity to conceive it. I have not a doubt but that old Jupiter's chain, reaching from heaven to earth, was made of twenty-four links, and each link a letter. Most true, the art of writing is an art of many marvellous uses, and that of diaries one of the best of them. It is to this practice that Curran and some other great men, or men of great name, current for real greatness in the traffic of opinions, have attributed their height of fortunes. And it may be that they spoke true. It has happened before now that a timely shower, a slight gleam of sunshine, has shed its saving influence upon the seed that might otherwise have perished. In fact, registration is the best security of property. It will be long ere the light of reason will penetrate into the clay of our country, the mass

of our squirearchy, sufficiently to make them sensible of this. If they could only come to right conclusions upon a plain subject, they would no more endure to be any longer perplexed in the toils of lawyercraft, to acquiesce in the absurdity of our land-law, — that absolute mystery of iniquity, — than they would change places, they and all their families, with the workhouse pauper. But this is their own affair, — or, perhaps, not theirs, but the affair of Providence. Haply, it was so destined. Gudgeons must abound, else would there be no food for pikes.

Registration, then, is the best security of property ; and, upon this persuasion, I began to register my ideas. But, alas, even of our best acts how few are there that Reason can claim entirely for her own ! Even this was not her legitimate offspring, but what they call in the country a chance child, born between her and Fortune.

I happened to know a young lady who kept a diary,— dairy, I see I have written it, — well, accident is sometimes truth, and it is a kind of dairy, too, where the loose fluidity of our thoughts is changed into consistence, the *lactea ubertas* of the fancy, nay, even the three times skimmed sky-bluishness of the literary lady, expressed and strengthened to a form.

One day I surprised this young lady in the very act of committing herself to paper. There was her heart in its undress, ay, and yet more, in the very naked loveliness of its nature, — a sight that my curiosity would have died to see, and yet was not to be gratified. I had a mere glimpse of the figures ; the next moment they were huddled up in their white vestments, their virgin sheets, as hurriedly as a bathing nymph at the intrusion of a profane foot, or the aspect of some gairish eye. I marked her confusion, and was malicious enough (this of course) to inquire into the cause. “ O, it’s nothing at all.” Nothing ! I might have answered with Shakspeare, indeed !

then why such fearful precipitancy of it into your bosom ? — the quality of nothingness hath no such need to hide itself. Still she persisted, and I insisted all the more, — but in vain ; it was the virginity of her mind, the express image of her maiden purity. Sooner than surrender it, she would have yielded up to me any thing that license could have asked. There is a method in use among lawyers, of discovering a defendant's real title by suggesting a false one, and so "by indirections find directions out " ; this is a shrewd practice out of Westminster Hall as well as in it, and one that I essayed here : —

" Well, then, I see it is a love-letter."

" No, indeed."

" O, but I am sure it is, — a flagrant love-letter. I see the reflection of it in your face at this moment."

Nothing would serve now but the confession.

" You are excessively impertinent, but, if you must know, I was writing a diary."

" Indeed ! pray let me see it. I have not an idea how to make the most of a day. I should like of all things to know it."

But the tongue is a fast goer, and the pen, even that of the readiest writer, is too slow to follow it. Translations are bad things, and of all translations that of talk into writing is the very worst. To silence me, and get rid of my importunity, my fair damsel promised, that, if I would keep a diary myself, and show it to her at the year's end, she would be equally liberal, — would require me faithfully in kind. I caught at the proposal, signified my acceptance of its terms, and the next evening began practice as a diarist, —

" Noting, ere they pass away,
The fleeting shadows of the day."

' I am afraid that I have quoted these lines before, but no matter, they may stand ; I cannot see why a sen-

tence, any more than a single word, should be limited to one appearance. Wherever it is appropriate, it should be welcome.

At first I confined myself to facts ; rendering an exact account of my comings and goings, eatings, drinkings, and visitings, and leaving the rest to Lethe ; sinking the heart, soul, and mind, even against the nature of their buoyancy. But I soon discovered that I was in error ; my facts were barren, dry as the remainder biscuit, as the bones of pilgrims upon the desert. The coloring of our life is in our feelings ; these I must depict, if I wished to represent myself aright ; this I undertook to do. I did it from that time ; and the consequence is, that I can look along my course of life, pore over it from point to point, and see myself reflected there, darkly or cheerfully, as the moment was one of cloud or sunshine. I can compare my past being with my present one ; meditate upon my changes in hopes, wishes, and opinions ; and speculate upon the changes yet to come,— changes still deeper, I trust, and of more solemn adumbration. Repeatedly, on glancing at my diary, have I started to see my ghost, to contemplate in clear outline the image of my former self, and as often have I been tempered by the contemplation to a new and a better spirit.

Miss — demeaned herself most traitorously ; flung her good faith to the winds ; trampled upon the sacredness of her promise. However, in the sincerity of my heart, I here assure her of my forgiveness. She has since submitted herself to a husband, and to him I resign my right. The thoughts of her soul, the recesses of her inmost self, it is for him only to penetrate. In the mean time, I have my advantage,— one that no perfidy can filch from me,— I am become a confirmed diarist. I thank her for the example of her practice, and commend

it most earnestly to her continuance. Peace be with her, and prosperity, and all happiness.

So much for my diary. I had secured one point, and I proceeded to make good another. I had read a multitude of books, but I found upon survey that my knowledge, except as to single facts, was not much augmented by them. My management of them was much the same as that of Virgil's Sibyl. Instead of committing them to the recesses of my memory, and there laying them up in some rational order, I placed them, as she of Cuma did her leaves, barely within the vestibule. There possibly they would stay for a brief moment or two, but, as soon as the door was opened to give access to any new guest, they were dissipated by the draught, scattered in all directions, and as worthless, or nearly so, henceforth, as the literal dry leaves themselves. My memory had always been good, and it was so still ; but to remember a heap of facts, and to forget how they were framed into a system, is as useless and as absurd as it would be for any man to amass a quantity of watchworks, — springs, wheels, and cylinders, — and never trouble himself to inquire how they were to be put together. In memory, and indeed in all mental processes, just as in machinery, the design is the main thing ; it is from the general drift, the survey of the system, and not from the assurance of its individual facts, that the intellect is instructed and enlarged. To expect to learn all the sciences by the sight of a confused heap of letters thrown together upon a table would be a vain thing ; and yet those very same letters, when properly and orderly ranged into words, sentences, and treatises, would lead us infallibly to that end, if we had only the requisite attention and perseverance. The mind is in the same predicament ; to be subservient to it, we must not only remember but recol-

lect ; the distinction explains itself by the decomposition of the two words.*

To rectify this confusion, to make a bridge over the chaos of my memory, I hit upon a new process,—new to me, although old enough to every inquirer into such matters ; it was no other than a kind of artificial memory, a form of Grey's *memoria technica*. When I wished to get up a book, to follow the main course of its theory, I used to select a word, or a syllable of a word, from the exposition of each leading principle, frame the whole into a sentence, significant if possible, and in that way I could secure its carriage in my memory. It was a concentration of nutriment, a comestible essence, compacted in the closest form for the travelling intellect.

I mastered a variety of books in this way, thoroughly and effectually. The truth is, that, in the ordinary way of reading, we presume, when we get to a volume's end, that its whole order and arrangement are duly impressed upon the memory. And so probably it is, if the volume be a novel or romance,—any thing that develops itself as it goes along, and requires no effort of attention from the reader ; but where the intellect is tasked, as it must be if it is to be improved, the case is far different. One chapter effaces another ; the last is first, and the first most usually last, in the order of our remembrance. Consequently, there is no whole ; nor yet, to use a word for once in its true meaning, any wholesomeness of use or digestion. The system is lost,—the design is vanished altogether.

To this the artificial process is a pretty sure remedy, when rightly applied. For me, the arbitrary symbols that I have spoken of, the chosen words and sentences,

* This distinction when I made it was new to me, but I now find that in itself it is as old as Aristotle.

served me as stepping-stones over the stream ; they were the marks on the trees, whereby, after long wanderings in the wood, I could retrace my way, and was at home again. I could pass and repass by their observance ; the points and bearings of my course were made familiar to me. One of the highest praises that a Frenchman can give to an artist, an advocate, a general, is that his *coup d'œil* is effective, — just, quick, and comprehensive. Well, the Frenchman has my assent ; and this quick-sighted, and full-sighted, and clear-sighted faculty is to be attained no way more expeditiously than by the use of this artificial memory ; a use that may show us at a glance, represent to us in the quickness of thought, a system that we have been learning laboriously for days and weeks together.

In most of my other devices for self-improvement there was something of originality, I fancied myself an inventor, and not altogether without reason ; but my next had been worn threadbare, — as stale as affectation itself. This was nothing else than the compilation of a commonplace-book. The term is a strange one ; strangely perverted and abused from the nature of its birth. It would be curious to compare the many points of difference, and the few points of resemblance, between the ancient *loci communes* and our modern commonplaces, — but this is the affair of the grammarian. I must be content to hold myself to my subject.

I owe the adoption of this expedient, together with some other advantages and many blessings of my life, to the favor of the softer sex. Once, at an evening party, I was requested by a young lady to write something in her album, — to mar with “foul defeature” the lustre of its virgin purity. This I refused. I loved the innocence of the white page better than to contaminate it. I was steadfast against all solicitation. However, the volume

was revealed to me ; notwithstanding my ungracious contumacy, I was permitted to have a sight of it. I saw at once that it was a mere matter of transcription, a cento of approved passages from Moore, Scott, Byron, and their imitators or emulators. Could I cherish any design against the peace of a young woman, I should have rejoiced above all things to see her in this employment, and studied to turn her taste to my account, to fan the gentle fire within her bosom, her vestal flame, to the height of my own raging passion, — but this was not my disposition. All that I did was to express my surprise at her laboriousness, interrogate her as to the use of copying what was open to read everywhere, and recommend her another plan. But she doted on her prejudices, — all my remonstrances were vain, — I was unable to prevail with her. “ Well,” I said at last, “ the hint, at all events, is too good to be thrown away ; if you do not choose to entertain it, I will work it out myself, and on my own account.” It was said and done. I began my book of commonplaces, and in a short time had made much progress with it. Not that I walked in the old ways ; I was far too much devoted to my own sweet will, my humor of independence. I would never copy out a passage ; lines, phrases, and sentences were my only ware. In this I am of opinion, even now, that I did wisely. These commonplace-books are good for very little, except as stores of material, as repositories for things of after use. They are not for show, but for exercise. It is evident, then, that if you give a young architect a house ready built, and intended so to stand, you do not give him the materials for building one, — for employing himself in his craft, realizing his instructions by his practice. For this he has need of bricks and mortar, and other the like implements ; not of another man’s labor, which does but preclude his own.

I drew some benefit from this practice, but it was not an unqualified one. It helped me so far as it set me on the watch to seek out in a book whatever it might have of brilliant or of elegant, — happy turns of expression, — clever phrases, — witticisms sharpened to a point. To descry these things I had to examine each sentence in its detail, to look a work through, and not, as it had been my wont, merely over. I began to know the genius of the language, to be conscious of its spirit ; and so I enjoyed my reading the more. My taste was refined and quickened ; I was familiar with the merits of composition, and could therefore appreciate them.

Then, on the other hand, there were disadvantages. A child with his first whip, a purchase of an hour back, will be for ever cracking it importunately, in season and out of season ; and so with all novelties, fine new phrases among the rest. When I had got my jewels I could not rest satisfied to keep them in my casket ; I was ambitious to exhibit them at once, to make an occasion for their display, if I could not find one. Thus says the poet : —

“ The fool hath planted in his memory
An army of good words ”;

and it was of me, and the like of me, that he spake it. Nothing is so nauseous in society as to see a man, instead of following a subject where it leads him, twist and torture it most unnaturally, in order to suit it to a phrase that he has prepared, cut and dry, for the service ; leading the conversation into an ambush, only that he may give play to his sharp-shooters when he has tricked us within their reach. But these are the faults of wantonness, — mere luxuriances ; time and experience will correct them.

“ 'T is not the hasty product of a day,
But the well ripened fruit of sage delay.”

Upon the whole, all these practices, together with some

others yet more minute than these, and therefore more tedious in their recital, were of good service to me. Their direct advantage, their operation upon the objects actually proposed, was by no means insignificant ; while their indirect uses, their effect upon the general health and cheerfulness of my mind, were yet more important. No man can be happy without an occupation ; a worldly occupation, a business or profession, is not always necessary, though indeed it is a most desirable ally ; but the mind, at all events, must be engaged, looking forward to some definite scope, and pressing towards it. This, by common consent, is the one great mode of happiness.

But, as happiness depends mainly upon occupation, so also does intellect upon happiness. One might as well expect a ripe fruitage from winter, as a full intellectual maturity from gloominess of spirit. On the contrary, as often as one is engaged in a good and commendable work, actively and earnestly engaged in it, the very consciousness of our condition, the warmth generated by our activity, is sure to enliven all our faculties, to animate us with a new spirit.

This was the principal achievement of all my exercises. It was not so much the immediate accession of intelligence, though I had this likewise, as the peace of mind that passes all understanding, and in effect promotes it so powerfully. Complacency and cheerfulness are conditions of all intellectual success ; every thing, little or great, that promotes them, promotes also the light, and warmth, and productive efficacy of the mind.

I grant that this original motive force is more decidedly necessary for the happiness of some men than for that of others. It has its degrees of advantage. For instance, the workingman, the merchant, the lawyer, are occupied more or less each by his respective business. For the time covered by that occupation they have no need of

any other impulse to drive on the machine of life, the exigencies of their calling act upon them sufficiently. But no man, not even such men as these, can neglect his mind without suffering grievously for his negligence. To a certain extent, at all events, they are subject to the common law. If we have nothing but our business to fill up our time, we must be tortured with many a long hour of vacancy. It is astonishing, says Johnson, how little of a professional man's time is actually devoted to his profession. Of course this is not a universal rule, but it is very certain that it is a general one ; and it is precisely where the experience of idleness is most unfrequent that its presence is felt most painfully. It is custom that makes a hard hand. The transition or depression, as we may well call it, from activity into indolence, the subsidence from sparkling and foaming energy into mere flatness, is the very incubus of the spirit. Bear me witness, ye migratory citizens, frequenters of Brighton, Bath, and Ramsgate for fashion's sake, retailers of yourselves and your dull days after the measure of provincial modishness ; alas ! it were easier for you to grow into your counters, to make a thousand per cent. profit of your business, than to find a market abroad where you may bestow your leisure minutes to advantage.

Besides, it is not every employment that is an occupation ; we may have motion *in vacuo*. Many kinds of handicraft, and frequently even the routine of trade, the sessionary hours of the shopkeepers, are despatched without any activity of attention ; the spirits, consequently, may sink, the whole faculty may flag, the mind may be in prostration, while the hands are drudging at their work. In such cases, the self-originating force is requisite for satisfaction to the man of business as well as to the gentleman ; to this we have a host of witnesses. Many a man has endeavoured to amuse himself by manu-

al employment, by the exercise of some handicraft, and again abandoned it upon trial, feeling that, however it might be urged, still it left the mind open. Cowper, the poet, is one out of a multitude of examples. In the martyrdom of his melancholy he tried all sorts of mechanical pastimes, but was soon weary of them all, and found his only relief in composition.

In truth, the independence of the mind is the only proper independence. A man may be independent, as it is called, in fortune, —

“Lord of himself, that heritage of woe,” —

that is, he may walk through his pilgrimage without a staff, and balance himself as he can, or else fall prostrate ; living, as it has been well expressed, like a plant without a leading shoot, to dwindle away and perish, — or he may be independent, in the popular sense, by his business or otherwise ; but these are only forms of speech. The support that really sustains a man is his own spirit. That alone can vindicate him from dependence on aught beside. Without it he is a mere carcass, susceptible of outward impressions, and those alone. The mind is the only monarch ; honor it ; do it observance ; render it all its dues of tribute, its custom of allegiance.

It is a great thing to attempt any improvement whatever of one's mind or heart regularly and methodically ; not so much on account of the single object, as because the first success, in all probability, is the parent of many others ; we are not satisfied with the first step, we are anxious to pursue the series ; if a single link be of so much worth, what, we ask ourselves, must be the preciousness of the whole chain ? This was exemplified in my own case. An incident befell me which may be worth the trouble of relation, not because there is any *thing* of personal interest in it, for indeed it has none,

but as a practical proof to clergymen that a single word, a solitary seed, will occasionally take root even in the laxity of indifference ; and that, therefore, they should persist always, and indulge no faintheartedness. The story is this. One Sunday, after a long night carried over into the day, and spent throughout in the looseness of sociality, I took a fancy to go to church ; a mere fancy it was,—the offspring not of any sense of duty, but of self-weariness, and ignorance where else to bestow myself. Such an outset promised but ill, yet it pointed to a most happy end. I went to a renowned preacher, a man who has done in his day the work of a zealous Christian, and improved his talent, not five-fold merely, nor tenfold, but almost beyond computation ; one who has indeed been the saver of many souls. For what he has wrought upon me he has my best prayers and gratitude, and the prayer, though not of a righteous man, availeth much, if it be offered *for* such a one in testimony of his righteousness. I will not name him; in truth I need not,—the name is in the character.

I took my seat in the church, and sat there a long time dreamingly, without any more significant impression upon my mind than the blank walls could convey to it. I stayed out the time of service, but it meant nothing to me ; I had better have been in a sound sleep, so had I been less sinful. The preacher got up into the pulpit, and my faculty of attention, exhausted as it had been by the long drain of the night, served me but for the text, and scarcely survived it. The clear light of truth, the earnestness of the gospel preacher, his force of argument and impressiveness of manner, were all lost upon me ; I was fallen into a kind of dose, when, on a sudden, the words, “Examine yourselves, I say, examine yourselves,” sounded in my ears with the effect of the last trumpet ; I started into attention, but the time was well-

nigh past, the sermon was at its close. However, as I went homeward, the emphatical injunction, "Examine yourself," continued yet to work upon me; at last I surrendered myself to its force. Well then, I said, I will make the experiment. I did so from that day.

Self-examination, the virtue with which I had thus recently become acquainted, has been recommended a thousand times as a main engine of morality; and very justly; we can hardly advance a step without it; we must be sure of the ground we stand upon before we can go beyond it safely. Security of property, the political economists tell us, and we all know it to be true, is the chief inducement to industry,—the prompter of thrift and acquisitiveness. But if we know not what is properly our own, if we have so little interest in it as not even to take the trouble of inquiring about it, how should we go on in our increase, and wax daily? The thing is out of all hope; most men in this respect are very children,—children in the dark; they shut their eyes obstinately, and so think to withdraw themselves not merely from imaginary alarm, but from real danger. The dastardly, self-deceiving hypocrites!

"Disguise, thou art indeed a wickedness
Wherein the pregnant enemy doth much."

Nine-tenths of us all, as regarding our time and talents, are no better than reckless, spendthrift profligates; we are afraid to examine our condition, to look into it with considerate eyes,—

"For therein should we read
The very bottom and the dregs of hope,"—

and so we are fain to go on spending, wasting, and ruining ourselves, "till that grim sergeant, Death, so strict in his arrest," drags us off,—alas! not to an abiding home,—but to a prison-house, a place of anguish and of torture. Short accounts, they say, make long friends.

Without them nobody can stand well with his conscience or with his Maker. It is by subjecting ourselves frequently to review, and in no other way, that we must attain to any high degree of mental discipline and efficiency. If the eye of the master be not there, order is abroad, and service runs wholly into riot.

Such is the efficacy of the practice in respect of morality ; but it was my misfortune to make very little use of this its most blessed purpose. My interest at that time was in matters of intellect, and I gave myself wholly to those things ; as to morality and religion, if I did as well as my neighbours, I fancied that I should do well enough. My religious sentiment, as it was the noblest, so, also, it was the last work of my spiritual creation.

Among my other methods of self-improvement, I renewed my old rhetorical exercises, not publicly nor ambitiously, but for my own private use. Once or twice I attended in the debating-room, but I sat there as quietly as if I had been present only on sufferance, and under a strict condition of silence. The fact is, that the bravade of the practised speakers astounded me ; their quickness perplexed me ; their confidence, by the contrast of my own nervousness, made a child of me, — a very infant. Rousseau, who was in truth a miracle of sensitiveness, a creature of nerves, has somewhere expressed his wonder that any reasonable being should be hardy enough to talk at all in society, seeing that the utterance of the simplest sentence involves so many conditions, — the knowledge of facts, persons, and all sorts of complicated relations. This is extreme. People in general will wonder not with him, but at him. But, as for oratory, it is indeed most marvellous that any human talent and experience should be so completely victorious, as we see daily that it is, over the difficulties opposed to them. In my case, independently of all general obstacles and apprehensions,

I was afraid of myself, frightened at my own shadow, or that of my reputation, — a poor thing, indeed, and a sickly, but I was myself of no greater force, and therefore I stood in awe of it.

On the whole, my reserve was perhaps prudent, though my reason for it was sufficiently childish. Oratory is of slow growth ; it follows the general development of the intellect ; one can no more attain it off-hand, by the observance of this and that rule, than a boy can attain the stature and strength of manhood by a month's training ; it cometh not with observation, —

“ Crescit occulto velut arbor ævo.”

In fact, to speak well,— I do not say to declaim, but to speak,— one must possess, in a high degree, all other intellectual excellences,— readiness, self-control, confidence, acuteness, discrimination, and real knowledge ; the knowledge, that is, of things in their mutual relations and their relation to principles ; not a general cloud of ideas, but facts framed into information. Such a qualification as this is much too high to be common, and therefore it is that we have so few good speakers.

However, I had the comfort of the exercise, though I could not flatter my vanity with the exhibition. When the sun shone not, when the light within me was extinguished and my joyousness sunk in depression, I had nothing to do but to start up from my chair and speak upon any stirring subject, and straightway I was a new man ; my blood was warmed, my spirits were enlivened, my whole soul was quickened. When the vehemence of my passion was over, still it left its glow behind it, a calm complacency, a gentle glory, an undazzling clearness of the twilight.

I remember a sad case of martyrdom, not indeed to oratory, but to the horrors of insufficiency in it. The

example may be useful, pregnant with good instruction ; at all events, the impression upon my memory is so strong that I cannot but reproduce it. I had a young friend at Cambridge who was anxious to be a speaker. He kept his own counsel and took none from others, breathing not a syllable of his intention to the moment that he made his essay ; careful, probably, lest his lustre, like that of an expected comet, should be dimmed by anticipation, — lest he should cast a shadow before him at his coming. Well, his time came, and he got up in the debating-room, in all confidence, as he afterwards assured me, and never doubting of his success ; fanciful of overwhelming applauses and majorities. But unluckily — alas ! no, say rather unhappily — it was his first appearance, — apparition would be the phrase, for indeed its effect was most ghostlike ; his novelty was marked, expectation was still as death ; the silence was a spell upon him ; as he rose the view of a vast void opened itself before him, he felt that he had undertaken to fill it to the satisfaction of an earnest assembly ; he faltered at the prospect, floundered about awhile, failed at last, and broke down altogether. This is one of the hardest trials of human vanity ; it was much too hard for his infirmity ; he could not endure himself after his failure ; his thoughts haunted him like fiends ; he fled before them, anxious to hide his head anywhere but in his own home. He was a man of many acquaintances, but hardly a friend among them ; no one who could understand his grief or the manner of it ; none, consequently, to sympathize with him. I was more spiritual than the rest of them, less worldly callous, and so to me he came for refuge. My treatment of him was one of my few courses of practice that have flowed, to the gladdening of my conscience, kindly and Christianly, — blessing and being blessed ; leaving behind them an abiding freshness of verdure in

the great desert. His necessities were greater than mine, and therefore I preferred them. I cherished him in his affliction, spoke kindly unto him, and treated his poor soul with all tenderness of affection, as a brother with a broken-hearted sister ; proposing walks to him, entertaining him through long evenings, breaking and sifting the mass of his mental coagulation, trying it at all points, discussing it through an infinite variety ; still he was moaning and unquiet ; his mind was under arrest, like a man in darkness and difficulty, — suspicious that he is ruined, that he must fail, but not daring to confess his suspicion, no, not even to himself ; brooding over it, nevertheless, and raising horrible shapes out of it.

But the aspirant orator is as much under fascination as the gamester ; my friend was not content to acquiesce, he would be a tempter still ; he screwed himself up to a repetition, but, alas ! miscarriage, although abortive, is not always barren ; one failure is the parent of another ; poor —— was condemned to be an essayist. His late murdered subject, the dead body of his former perpetration, lay across his way ; he recoiled at the idea of it ; he could not force himself so far as to get over it ; in a word, he failed again, and failed utterly. This was beyond his power to bear ; the oppression weighed upon him too heavily, it destroyed his balance ; he fell into a confirmed melancholy, such as a shade or two more of gloom might have darkened into madness. But Providence is over us all, and happily he was chastened in his affliction, perhaps even by it ; he took a religious impression, vindicated himself from his despondency, rose to the region above the clouds, and was superior thenceforth to the world and all its vanities. He went out as a clergyman to one of our colonies, and has been resident there since. But I saw him once, while he was on a visit to this country, and then, when I had almost forgot-

ten the facts, I learnt from him the height and depth and breadth of his affliction. Tempered as he then was, he could smile upon it as upon the thought of any other childish suffering, but he assured me that the despitfulness of it had so wrought upon his mind as to drive him to the point of distraction. To be sure, as Mercutio says, the wound was neither so deep as a well nor as wide as a church-door,—it was but a small sting to all appearance, but it was enough for his misery ; it left its venom behind, and thence the mischief.

Thus is the world governed for the most part. It is not the absolute fact, the substance of our grief, but the mere reflection of a shadow,—our opinion of the opinions of others as to our condition,—that makes us miserable. This is a common curse, but any one who will trust, not, indeed, my assurance, but his own experience of it, will find it to be a very silly one. Idlers, it is true, men who have nothing else to think of, may occasionally turn their memories into so many storehouses of malice,—make it their business to deal in detraction, to sell small scandal by the tale ; in human society, it is the drones that have the sting and venom ; but men of the world, people of use and service, are too full of themselves, too much occupied with their projects, to concern themselves about the foibles of a neighbour. Selfishness in this one case is a safeguard against the lack of charity.

On the whole, then, I did wisely in not entering the lists until I had prepared myself for the contest. Oratory is like chess,—a game of entire skill, where one must rely solely on one's resources, and can hope nothing from hazard ; or, if there be any hazard in it, it is only as a Frenchman has said of something else, for those who play well. In this, as in the other arts of display,—poetry, painting, and the rest,—if a man have no es-

pecial skill, and be content therefore to keep himself on a level with the multitude, and pretend to no distinction, he does well ; but if he chooses to exhibit himself for his vainglory, and his exhibition fail, there is good reason that he should be ridiculous. Oratory is an excellent thing, but only when it is brought to excellence, otherwise it is naught ; by the old rule of the Schoolmen, “*corruptio optimi pessima*” ; or, in the terse language of old Terence,—

“ *Si quidem Hercli possis, nil melius neque fortius,* —
Verum si incipies neque perficies gnaviter,
Actum est, peristi.”

Oratory is the great test of talent, as thought is of intellect. Composition is a sort of middle term,— oscillating between the two, and partaking the qualities of each. To this last, as I began now to fancy that I was sufficiently disciplined, I again betook myself. But I had miscalculated my force. I went to work without my instruments, I had not sufficiently strengthened nor whetted my faculties, and therefore all that I could do was to little good purpose. I wrote pedantically. I treated almost every subject with the prosiness and prolixity of a Commissioner’s Report, or any other official document ; my style was sprawling and awkward, like a great overgrown boy. That was in fact my precise condition. I had overgrown the boyhood of my intellect, and had not yet obtained its manhood. There was nothing in my composition that you could mark especially for censure, there were no salient faults in it ; but it had one pervading fault, and that the worst of all, — to wit, wearisomeness. It savored of the academy ; it had all the regularity, tameness, and insipidity of a copy after models. It was indeed composition, without a single feature of creation upon the face of it. It had been passed through an alembic, and lost in the process all its genuine raciness

and flavor. Yet it was not altogether without its redeeming points,—its elements of excellence. I have several papers of that date still by me, and a short time since I had the curiosity, for there was but little of any other inducement, to look over them. Here and there, scattered over a wide mass, I found some traces of thought, a few gleams of humor, and points even of actual strength ; but even these drew their chief lustre from the quality of their foil, the dulness of the general ground where they were so conspicuous ; the whole was like Indian jewelry, where, if there be a few gems of price, they may shine forth brightly, but the effect of the whole work is destroyed by the tastelessness of the setting. In short, my composition was laborious ; I had a difficulty in bringing my machinery into play. Every thing was strained and unnatural ; tedious, therefore, drawling, and disgusting.

I have spoken long since of my meditative practice, and of its occasion. My courtship was unsuccessful. But I acquired the friendship of my lady love, though not her entire confidence. This was a point gained, for at any time I could make use of the former for the furtherance of the latter ; I now tried the experiment. I resumed my broken thread, and endeavoured to piece it out.

I am fond of recounting incidents. If I did not know my age, I might guess myself an old man from the propensity. They may be valueless in themselves, things of no pregnancy, and yet, if they have a marked character, and so be long remembered, they are as lamps in darkness. They may serve us, in the retrospect, to trace back the course whereby we have come ; a single small fact will often supply a link in the chain of evidence, and connect what would otherwise be broken and unaccount-

able. Therefore I am fond of incidents. Here is one of them.

One winter's evening I was sitting in my room in the luxury of fireside enjoyment ; my tea-tray was on the table, my books spread around it in amiable confusion, sleeping like so many soldiers off their guard ; the curtains were drawn, the very kettle was singing on the hearth, and even the bare walls were mellowed into a glow by the cheerfulness of the blaze. This is the peculiar season of "musing meditation," not indeed "fancy free," but rather full of fancies, and devoted to them. Such was my mood, and I resigned myself to it in willing captivity. I sat watching the births and deaths in the fire, the quick successive generations of that most changeful element ; heads of old men and women, dogs, horses, and other figures innumerable. At last came a gorgeous pile of architecture, growing and framing itself to my view. On it went, increasing in dimensions and heightening in glory, till suddenly came the crash, — the whole pile fell in, and reduced itself into a mass of darkening deformity. I started in dismay. In such a mood as that, one is easily impressed ; and the shock, slight as it was, had given a turn to my spirits. "Why should I waste even a moment upon idle fancies ? Why not rather frame into their due order the images within my mind, and so lay them up imperishably, as material for my intellect, perhaps even for my greatness." I brooded over the idea, till it began to take a definite form. I determined to realize it, and addressed myself steadily to that object.

I had divers good instruments for the purpose; some recently acquired, and others that I had long possessed ; still, in spite of all their service, and they served me well and faithfully, my success for a long time was any thing but satisfactory. I was like a paralytic ; outwardly I was complete, furnished with manifold good gifts. There was

the stature, thews, sinews, bulk, and big assemblage of a man, — all but the invisible spirit. I drew from many sources ; read, studied, and commented, — commented, I mean, in its proper sense, not merely that I made notes and scribbled upon margins ; such, for the most part, are but idle comments ; — but I followed the writer with my mind ; commented not upon him, but with him ; went along with his whole course ; read, marked, and learned him inwardly. These and other services I did ; but the complement was yet wanting, — the originative energy, and independent activity of thought ; these failed me, and, failing these, the entire system beside was available but for half its professed uses, paralytic on one side. I was a collector of learning, much as the members of the Roxburgh Club, many of them at least, are book-collectors, — for curiosity, and not for service. My objects as I attained them were laid on the shelf straight-way. They were like the waxen apples that one has set out as chimney ornaments, matters not of nourishment but of ostentation. In short, I was not master of my mind.

Happily, I was conscious of my defect, and set myself to remedy it. The sensitive, modest man, as compared with his self-conceited neighbour, is at many disadvantages, and this is the only thing I know that at all compensates them. The coxcomb, however shallow he may be, fancies, nevertheless, that he has depth enough to cover his channel, and so he goes babbling on, never caring to supply his penury from any further resources ; till at last, like the stream in Job, when it waxes warm, then he vanishes. The diffident man, in the mean while, sees and feels his imperfections more painfully, perhaps, than the very reality would warrant ; but he is thus induced to labor for their rectification all the more earnestly, — even as I did on this occasion,

The first fruits of my success are yet laid up in my recollection. There I have consecrated them, and there they are likely to remain,—

“Dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.”

I had been passing a day at St. Omer, on my way to Paris. To wile away the time, to deliver myself from the tediousness of an inn, I had been playing draughts, drinking coffee, and discussing all sorts of subjects with a young Englishman, intended, I believe, for a physician, who had been educated abroad from his childhood. In the course of our conference, quite gratuitously, and without the smallest provocation on my part, he began to talk downright infidelity. I accepted his challenge, unadvisedly, for I was unequal to the contest. He had studied the subject, was conversant with the main arguments, had got up a variety of points upon it ; and, besides, he was readier with his words than myself, and, probably, with his wits also ; on the whole, then, I was no match for him. We were long and deep in the discussion ; it was only just as I was to start, that he went away, and left me with my whole mind in a ferment. I endeavoured to work it off. I had the *coupé* of the diligence to myself ; the evening was pitch-dark, not an object to distract my attention, and so my soul was left to settle upon her subject.

Between my zeal for my mother church (not the Church of England, but that of Christ) and despite at my discomfiture, I was excited to a pitch of vehemence. As the prophet says, “While I was musing the fire burned within me ; then spake I with my tongue,”—or, rather, I fancied myself to be speaking. I poured forth my spirit from within me, but spiritually, and not vocally, — *cognitionem murmure agitans*, as Quintilian expresses it. I thought an oration ; I breathed the thought of it,

with all the animated excitement of the orator, but without the thunder of his voice. Neither was this last necessary. What says Elijah? — “There came a strong wind, but the Lord was not in the wind ; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake ; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire ; and after the fire a still, small voice” ; and therein, it seems, was the Lord. In short, I used the practice in thinking that had before served me so successfully in reading and in talking. I will give you the whole method.

CHAPTER XIII.

“The man who begins to reflect finds himself in a labyrinth, whereinto he has been led blindfold.” — HOBBS.

I HAVE before mentioned, on the authority of a living writer, that there is no book extant on the art of meditation. This is an extraordinary fact. I would say of it, by way of paraphrase from Lord Bacon, that those who pursue the other sciences and neglect this, the chief and principal of them, are like Penelope’s suitors, who deserted their lady and paid their court to her waiting-maids. But in this matter many people are subject to superstition. They have a notion that there is something of mystery, of a deep religious mystery, in the mind or about it ; that, in the poet’s words, “there ’s a divinity doth hedge it in.” If one speaks of it as a materialist, straightway they entertain certain dark, indistinct notions of infidelity, or even of atheism, in the speaker. They judge of it as the Philistines did of the ark, — if it go of itself, then it is of the Lord ; if not, if it require human

means to put it in motion, then it is a profane thing, or, as the Scripture expresses it, some chance that has befallen us ; whereas, in my humble opinion, it is equally of God, just as all things are beside, whether we have its service immediately from him, or mediately through the use of certain appliances, and upon the condition of our own industry. But this is the mere folly of superstition, the dreamery of fanatical fools, —

“ Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa.”

Upon these points I have no wish to enter into metaphysical discussions. They are not requisite for the subject, and I believe would only tend to cloud it. I need only state my conviction, that, whatever may be the origin of thought, its *process* is merely mechanical. This I believe is plain truth ; somewhat shocking, perhaps, to the pride of those senseless people, who, on the supposition that the mind — the intellect, in another word — is a mysterious, peculiar spirit, and one properly their own, would fain, against the Apostle’s words, be vainglorious of what they received from their Creator, as though they had it not of his gift. However, in the present day I do not know a single metaphysical writer who does not admit the conclusion, impliedly at least, if not in terms. Indeed, it is only on this assumption that we can argue about our mental faculties at all, or pretend to deal with them. If their processes be material and mechanical, we may be able to control them ; if they be spiritual only, then we cannot so much as form an idea of them ; for all purposes of argument, they are precisely as if they had never existed. I am aware that it would be impossible — even though we should admit the doctrine of what is called materialism, still it would be impossible — to trace out the process of thought satisfactorily, any more than of sensation. We cannot always employ, or even describe for the use of others, that “ dark lantern of the

Spirit," which none can see but those who bear it. Its organs, and consequently its operations, are so exquisitely fine, as to elude the most discriminating sense. We cannot, as Turgot says, "*prendre l'esprit sur le fait,*" and compel it to an account ; it is only by its effects that we can judge it. We have no double reflectiveness, no second mirror whereby we might see it at its work. In thinking, we must always proceed in a great measure by the *ἀλογος τριβή* of Plato ; the *usus irrationabilis*, as it is called by Quintilian. By the by, as I have now occasion, I would fain express my acknowledgments to that author. I am not aware that I am at all beholden to him as a borrower ; but the fund was open to me. In his strictures on the intellect, there is more, in my opinion, of practical wisdom than I have found in any other writer. His eighth book particularly, or his tenth, I cannot exactly say which, is admirable.

We walk, then, intellectually ; the wisest of us in some degree, and the vulgar wholly, by the way of experience. This with the latter is a "*vaga experientia, et se tantum sequens, mera palpato.*" So Lord Bacon has expressed it, with reference to some other subject than this. But the wise man will endeavour to regulate his experience by judgment. It should be his aim,

“ *Ut varias usus meditando extunderet artes Paullatim* ”;

or, in the more emphatic words of Lucretius,

“ *Usus et impigra simul experientia mentis Paullatim docuit pedetentim progredientes.* ”

There are many different methods of thus regulating and overruling our ordinary habits of thought ; if, indeed, what is vulgarly called thinking deserve to be so called at all. It is with thinking as with cipher-writing, almost every one who practises it has some peculiar practice of his own. Such methods depend for the most part upon

mechanical, or, rather, physical processes ; and of these I believe the principal to be respiration. In conversation, in studious reading, and in oratory, I have already stated my conviction that the management of the breath is of very great importance, and I am just as thoroughly persuaded that this is true likewise of meditation, —that it governs in a great degree the thinking faculty.

I know very well that a theory like this is open at all points to ridicule. Wherever it may be known, the shafts, in all probability, will stand upon it as thick “as quills upon the fretful porcupine” ; the dealers in sarcasm, the philosophers of the present day, will give it no quarter. For this I am prepared ; only, when the laugh is over, let reason be heard. This is all that I claim ; and, if it be granted, I am right content. Many people are so ignorant of relations as to admit, speculatively, no great consequences, unless they follow from great causes. Truths ere now, and those of the purest quality, have been hidden, principally through this prejudice, from the learned, the worldly-wise among men, and revealed to babes and sucklings. They will be so equally in time to come, —possibly this may be one of them.

I would beg, however, to suggest, with all deference, to those stumblers *in limine*, that there is at all events a very close connection, if nothing more, between the faculties of thought and of respiration ; and this their observation will prove to them, if they will only give themselves the trouble to exercise it. For instance, let any man hold his breath and endeavour to think upon any subject, —he will find it impossible. He may attend, for attention is passive, but he cannot think actively. The hurry and confusion of mind that one feels on walking into a cold bath is attributable to the same cause. Respiration is checked, and the intellect consequently is abroad, —*peregrè est animus sine corpore*.

Neither is the association altogether a thing of my own invention. Far from it ; on the contrary, it is wonderful that it should never have been urged into notice, set forward in the point of battle, — so obviously do all languages, in some terms or other, point towards it. In Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and in every modern tongue within my knowledge, soul, spirit, and breath are signified by the same word. This common consent of nations has been regarded as a mighty argument for the truth of natural religion ; is it no argument at all for the establishment of any other truth ?

I need not enter into the detail. My new thinking method was precisely the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as the one I had before practised for the furtherance of my reading and other faculties. I breathed my thoughts forth, instead of suffering them to lie in stagnation. My breath was the current wherein they ran. By its action and gentle agitation, it set my whole mental frame in movement. I despatched every sentence in a breath, — sentence I mean in its strict literal sense, of an unspoken sentiment, — and then *ingeminans ictus* ; a second idea having flowed into the interval of vacuity, I applied myself to it in the same way, and so proceeded through the series. This I am confident is no more than what must necessarily be practised by every good thinker and orator, ay, and even reader. They practise it, perhaps, unconsciously ; as they are carried along, they pay no attention to the mechanism and action of their vehicle ; but they are carried by it nevertheless ; it is to that and that alone that they owe their progress.

Before this experiment, as often as I sat down to think, I found it difficult to set myself in motion. I was unable, as diplomats say, to take the initiative. My mind was like a log upon the water, a ship in a dead calm, lying there idly, her helm and sails useless,

unable to make what the boatmen call steerage-way, from the lack of wind to impel her and give the rudder a purchase upon her. But now I had got a steam-engine at work, working upon me and within me ; and by force of its alternate elevation and depression, its expiration and respiration, I could propel the whole body of my mind. At any moment, and in any circumstances, I could point my thoughts as I pleased to a particular direction, and throw them into a particular channel. When my mind was without form and void, and darkness was upon the deep, then would my spirit move upon the face of the waters, and form an intellectual creation out of chaos.

This, I have no doubt, will be, what the words of the Apostle were among the Greeks, foolishness to the learned. Metaphysicians, and such people, whose “extravagant and erring” speculations have cost them dear, and are therefore prized highly by them, will be abhorrent at simple truth. When they have been digging long and deep and found nothing, they will either feel or feign a most sage and reverend incredulity that any thing should have been discovered upon the surface. They execrate a plain, easy principle, heart and soul, as the pompous theological prelate execrates the simplicity of the gospel. They are book-ridden, rather than read. However, as far as I am concerned, they may still have their own way, — I do not pretend to interfere with them ; I offer them not a confutation of their doctrines, but a simple fact, though it is true that the explanation of this fact is by no means equally simple with the exposition of it, the assurance of its existence. What is the precise nature of the connection between the breath and intellect, the spirit and the soul, I am at a loss to determine ; nor can the deepest metaphysician on his part pretend to any surer *intelligence* as to the nature of many other plain meta-

physical agencies. Difficulty, then, is no disproof ; but I believe that several good reasons may be given why the fact should be as I have stated it, and I will endeavour to give one of them, that practice may be illustrated by theory, and the skeptic relieved from the hardship of trusting any thing so simple as his own experience.

It is established that we can think only in words ; they are our necessary instruments for the purpose. I believe it to be equally clear that we can employ words, in the way of thinking, only by the agency of our breath ; my experience assures me that it is so, and that it cannot be otherwise ; but this is more than I need assume ; it is sufficient to state, that, as we use words for the purpose of talking, that is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred where we use them at all, by expiration, with our breath, it would therefore be difficult, from the known laws of association, to use them for any other purpose, for instance, that of thought, except in that same conjunction ; where we are in the common continual habit of using two things together, we can hardly use either separately, even when only one is necessary for the service.

One of our own poets — Gray, I rather think — has given us as examples of extreme vividness, “ thoughts that breathe, and words that burn ” ; I vouch for the accuracy of his phrase. He was right, though in another sense than he intended, — wiser than he was aware of. The thoughts that breathe are indeed vivid and powerful thoughts, and they, and they only, can generate the “ words that burn, and fan them into a flame.” Sir Poet, I thank you for your authority.

This, then, in my opinion, is the main-spring of meditation, and consequently of composition, since the latter is, or ought to be, merely representative of the former. Many men have blundered on this point in pretending to give rules for composition as a first term and original

faculty, without saying a word beforehand of meditation. This is most perverse direction ; were we to follow such guides we should indeed go sadly astray, —

“ Hunting all our lives to find
The knowledge that we ‘ve left behind.”

It would be just as reasonable for a surgeon to be busying himself about his preparations for a birth, without having first assured himself of the gestation or even of the conception. In my judgment, meditation is the very marrow of the intellect, and, if so, it is time well bestowed to be inquisitive upon it. I shall make no further apology for the length of the ensuing observations.

With novices in thought the first step is generally the chief difficulty; they are subject, indeed, through their whole course, to manifold obstructions, but this is often a positive bar. At its outset, and before it has got well into play, the machine may be stopped absolutely by a very small obstacle. To counteract this *vis inertiae* and add force to the impulse, in short, to give the intellect a fair start, many strange suggestions have been made. One is reminded, in considering them, of the bags of wind taken on board ship by the companions of Ulysses ; the causes in this case as in that seem almost as inadequate to the proposed effect. Some men have endeavoured to stir their faculties by motion and strong exercise, others require absolute rest. Descartes, for instance, affirmed, that the watch-work of his mind never went well but in recumbency. Both may be right. The difference of disposition is a thing greatly to be regarded, just as in crystallization we are told that the solution must sometimes be stirred, and stayed at other times, in order to the effect. Most writers and musical composers even, and painters, have had their own discipline of preparation, — their methods of ordering and garnishing the temple for the reception of the spirit. One man would sit listening

to music, another would contemplate a fine picture ; many have screwed up their energies and dilated the soul to its full stretch by the recitation of poetry ; in Quintilian's words, precipitating the free spirit, swelling it into a torrent of forcefulness. These are only a few out of a multitude, units from hundreds of artifices ; they may all be good in their own way ; doubtless they all will be good if such be our special bias, if nature so gives us the direction.

But, after all, they are useful only as rudiments ; such trickery is below the elevation of the mind, the dignity of the real thinker. It is not the good workman that is wont to quarrel with his tools ; adminicular aids and clinging propensities are fit only for the groundling, the child who is unable to walk upright and must be fain to crawl and to creep on as he best may. I believe, in all sincerity, that the "spiritual impulse," the breathing energy commended by me a few pages back, will do every one good service, — every one, even the most thought-exercised man ; for the rest they are rather importunate than useful, except as leading-strings to babies.

Still there is reason in some rules, and we should do well to keep them generally in view, — generally, but not pointedly ; for it is this pointedness that fixes and transfixes the attention, nailing it, as it were, down, precluding it from its free range, and so spoiling all. In the first place we must be of good cheer, free and easy ; wearing our faculties, our mental investiture, loosely, as in an undress ; for constraint in matters of intellect is no less than utter condemnation. The cloud will keep out the sun ; therefore be *not careful* of what ye should say or think, but let the spirit dictate to you in that hour ; the soul must shine forth in cheerfulness, or the intellect will not throw off its cloak ; against the spitefulness of ill weather it will only wrap it around the closer. Again, when the thoughts

are once in motion, the mind fairly in train, eschew all vehemence of agitation. Reflection is nowhere else but only on the smooth surface. As I quoted it from the Scriptures, it is not in the great wind, nor in the fire, nor in the earthquake, but in the still, small voice, that the spirit is made manifest.

By the by, how far-reaching, and generally how exact, is the parallel between faith and intellect in their respective courses. Both are born by regeneration, and not according to the flesh ; arising into real life by the workings of the inward spirit, and thenceforth repudiating the world and the world's uses, becoming emancipate from the schoolmaster, clear of their weak and beggarly elements, fresh from the service of the law whereunto they were before in bondage. Again, whoever would receive either of them must receive it as a little child, in the integrity of heart, and innocence of soul, and purity of nature, or it shall be to his confusion. In both the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life ; the strictness of the Pharisee shuts the heart up and closes affections as well as faculties at their source ; carefulness, in both alike, precludes all hope of consummation ; confidence is the best test. To pursue the analogy ; with each there is a law of the members warring against the law of the mind, and bringing it into captivity. Finally, we see that in neither are many wise men after the flesh, nor many mighty, nor yet many noble men called.

Doubtless there are many points of resemblance that I have omitted, but these are enough to authorize, as it were, the intellect, and to sanctify it by the similarity. Indeed, the intellect, in its highest and purest quality, is a kind of faith of the mind ; excellent, not so much because it is conversant with forms, for that it very often is not, but because it is superior to them.

In thinking, as in most other things, patience and per-

severance are the chief points of the game, that is, if the elements of thought itself be not entirely wanting. We cannot frame the iron till it be hot, but we may make it hot by striking. Newton himself has given us, in a few words, his ordinary process of meditation ; a simple account, but touching and eloquent in its simplicity. It was his wont, he tells us, when he wished to master any subject, to fix his attention quietly but steadily upon it ; gradually the whole would discover itself, light would grow out of darkness, form out of shapelessness, order out of confusion, till the subject stood confessed before him.

“*Scindit se nubes et in æthera purgat apertum.*”

But patience is the only parent of this most amiable production ; the process is like that of the sun-glass ; it may be that at first there is but a small appearance of hope ; it is long ere the flame takes, but it is preparing to take, nevertheless, though the preparation be insensible to our grossness ; anon there is a symptom apparent, doubtfully, yet even so, — a confession of heat, a clear vapor ; then is the consummation at hand, the flame bursts forth, all is elasticity and energy.

But for this the sun must shine. Meditation must be wooed by us with a winning countenance, otherwise there is no hope. Here, indeed, as Shakspeare tells us, moody, dull melancholy is

“*Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair.*”

Here we are at the highest point, — *cetera inde plana ac proclivia*. When it is come to this the man is in the ecstasy of composition, — mental, at all events, - and written, if he be pleased to make it so ; though this latter process of clothing their purposes with words, of committing them to paper, is not altogether to the taste of some thinkers. It is with our mental as with our bodily issue, with our thoughts as with our children ; to generate

is pleasant, but the offices that ensue, of clothing, furnishing, disciplining, and preparing for the world, are not always equally so.

I need say but little of the very act of composition, as it is, or ought to be, the consequence of meditation, and altogether subservient to it. The former is the realization of the latter. When our thoughts are floating in the brain, and probably about to die into nothing, to vanish away for ever, —

“ Like the Borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place ;
Or, like the snow falls in the river,
A moment seen, then lost for ever ” ;

upon that comes this potent interceder, arrests the sentence of perdition, and substitutes his own record of perpetuity. For these floating thoughts

“ The pen
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.”

But herein is the danger. The metal should be thoroughly heated, and liquefied, and fused, each particle of it, and the whole mass of it, ere we attempt to cast it. We must gather our forces, and array them before we can give the word to march. Whereas, most men are too anxious to be at work, and their work in its result (for indeed it falls back upon them like a stone) is generally but weariness and ineffectiveness. They anticipate the beginning, and so protract, at all events, if they do not utterly preclude, the end. This is a most mischievous delusion ; observe it, guard against it, and by all means avoid it. Wait for the tide ; prepare yourself for the fulness of the deep waters, instead of driving madly on, and running hopelessly on the shallows. In a word, let your reservoir be brimming, or nearly so, before you open the sluices. Write from a full head. You

might as well attempt to scratch your thoughts upon paper without ink, or pour water from an empty pitcher, as to write from vacuity. These, our ideal spirits, must be called from the deep. The writing-itch is multiform, but this is one of the worst forms of it, — the itch of the fingers for the pen.

There is another precept worthy of all observance by those who would be writers. Lucan shall give it for me ; it is better in his words than in my own : —

“ *Successus urgere suos, instare favori
Numinis.* ”

We should be forward and not fainthearted. If we go but a step or two towards our purpose, we might as well never have set out, — better, indeed, as we should so escape frustration ; whereas most striplings in writership, as often as they are in company with their fancy, are satisfied with slight favors, content with a kiss, not reflecting that therein is no generative virtue, nor promise of any issue. As Lord Bacon tells us, we should use our learning not merely as a friend for conversation, nor as a mistress for wantonness, but as a wife for comfort, service, and procreation. The man who does otherwise, who dallies with a single idea and then dismisses it, is about as wise as the foolish boy who sowed a bean and would be for ever plucking it up to see how it was growing, whereas it was nothing in itself, but only the root of the future plant. A single bright thought, when we have struck it out, may be the parent of much light ; it may serve us as a lantern in our paths, a torch to guide us ; but, if we stand still, whereunto is its guidance ? Therefore we should follow up our game, taking nothing as done while any thing is left undone. And at first we should be content with the first flowings ; we should not press upon the subject too harshly nor too long, lest we bring the flavor of the wood into the wine. Let the liquor, the genuine

expression of the grape, stand by awhile with its impurities ; it will be soon enough in some aftertime to cleanse and rectify it ; of this, when the season is come, it will need much, and the richer the field, the more work for weeders. It has been said truly, that the elaboration of the writer is much like that of the sculptor, — it is not by adding, but by taking away, that his work is perfected. The device of each may be the same, —

“ *Minus dum formas.* ”

There is another capital rule. Give yourself a free course ; let your impulse carry you out ; go to your object in your own way ; account it the most mischievous of vanities to be perpetually looking out for quotations and allegories, golden apples of temptation, — foreign, and therefore improper thoughts to press into your service. Depend on it, while you step in the track of others, you will make no good speed, nor walk to any good purpose.

The exercise of composition to those who are masters of it is the highest of all human enjoyment, save that of the devotee, and perhaps, also, that of the impassioned and successful orator, while he is carrying his audience along with him. Composition, whether written or mental, acts upon the whole frame, pervades it universally, runs through every nerve and fibre, and quickens to a warm glow the entire being, not only during its practice, but long after it. When Horace and many other writers declare that under its influence they are endowed with wings to fly, that they spurn the ground beneath their feet, they speak, as far as sentiment is concerned, practically rather than poetically. The spirit is then stirred at its very source to a radiant, and gladsome, and sparkling energy. I am persuaded that thoughtful people have here a very great advantage, if they would only use it properly, over their unthinking neighbours. In the latter,

their inner, their inmost nature is absolutely dead, or at best as torpid as death itself. The nerves that are subservient to thought, and stimulated by it, are never in such people so much as called into action ; but there they exist still, and as nothing exists in vain, and every thing is intended to have its use, we may conclude, from all analogy, that the uses of those nerves can never be neglected or remitted with impunity ; but this is a wide subject, and one as deep as it is wide. I leave it to the consideration of *physicians*, in the largest sense of the word.

It is true, that, with many men who have attempted it, — with all, in fact, up to a certain point of proficiency, — composition is sheer labor, and that of a very irksome kind. As it is said in Scripture of the prophetic spirit, it is like as a fire, or like a hammer that breaks the rock to pieces ; but it is so only to the inexpert, from default of true principles and of the right method. The labor of the skilful is light ; while that of the fool, as the Proverbs tell us, wearieh every one of them. It is thus in all crafts ; experience is ease, — that is, if it be real, and not merely seeming, experience. When we reach it we are on an inclined plane, motion propagates itself ; we go along almost without an effort, and quite unconscious of it.

I tried my new acquisition, my spiritual method of thought, over and over again, for hours together, on my way from St. Omer, till I had persuaded myself of its sufficiency. The greater part of the night I beguiled by it ; I renewed it the next day ; and thus, on the whole, I made the most delightful journey of my life on the dreariest, dullest road travelled by man, — that between Calais and Paris. When I got there, when I found myself in the “mistress city,” I did as probably no Englishman ever did before me. On my former visit I had demeaned myself as one stung by the very gad-fly of excitement, —

infected from hand to foot with the itch of novelty. I had lived in the whirl, and could hardly bear my life out of it, for, when that was over, then came the sense of sickness, the depression of the spirits, the heaving of the stomach, the sickening of the soul in calm, the absolute self-weariness. But now I was another man, and altogether of another mind. Like Hamlet, give me but my imaginations, and I could live in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space. All that I wanted was the shade of quiet, —

“ Segregation
From open haunts and popularity.”

This it was not difficult to find, even in such a place as Paris. Day after day, as soon as I had despatched my breakfast, I used to betake myself to the Tuileries, and there, in one of the side groves, at a point as little frequented, or nearly so, as if it had been sacred to the Dryads, I took my accustomed seat, and resigned myself to my meditation. I was as much taken with it as a lover with his new mistress, or a young lady with the idea of her first lover. There would I sit, as very a hermit as ever dwelt within a desert, exhausting subject after subject ; or no, not that, — every subject is inexhaustible, as each extends itself to all the rest, — but seeming to exhaust them ; and at last, as the lengthening shadows admonished me, home again, in lightness of heart and joyousness of spirit, as one fresh from the conversation of fairies. This, with scarcely an exception, was the happiest era of my life. I know not when else I have enjoyed, in so short a period, so many hours of pure, clear, unqualified pleasure. I have continued the practice since, — the especial practice, I mean ; I try it from time to time, and it has never yet failed me, except occasionally from my own prior default.

Before I dismiss this subject, I will offer a few consid-

erations that may serve in some degree to explain it ; not indeed philosophically, but popularly; not from its depths, but at its surface. The first requisite for thought, as most of us know, is energy of attention,—an energy not violent, but gentle, and yet prevalent. Now, how is this to be attained ? Our habitual experience tells us, our instinct prompts us, to take a lesson from physical analogies. We know that when any strong effort is required,—as from the sailor at the capstan, or from the porter to raise his burden,—we naturally draw our breath strongly, as a preparation for it. So for any act of desperation or extraordinary energy,—to mount a breach, for instance,—what says Shakspeare ?

“ Hold hard the breath, and bind up every spirit
To his full height.”

As if the former were a necessary condition of the latter ; and so I believe it is ; the breath is the life of the body and of bodily exertion, and no less so of the intellect.

To hold the breath hard, then, is a requisite of attention, and one instinctively employed by us ; but to attend is not to think, any more than to make a lunge and rest upon it is to fence. For this there must be action and reaction ; the spirits must come and go. The tide makes its advances by the alternate progression and recession of its individual waves ; the fire is raised to its full height by the contraction and dilatation of the bellows.

For a week or two I practised my new talent in retirement ; afterwards I felt the spur of ambition, and became anxious for an occasion of display. In order to this I began to frequent a *café* on one of the Boulevards, where, as I understood, men of letters and politicians were wont to have their resort. Thither I used to go, enter the room, look around me, and, wherever I might chance to see any two or three men earnest in discussion, if their manners and countenances promised any thing intellectual,

I would take a paper, lounge quietly up, and plant myself beside them ; the debate could hardly be too long for me if it were but tolerably well sustained. And yet I took no part with them, though my forbearance was against my original intention ; I was the *auditor tantum*, — a mere listener and commentator. The fact is, I had not the excitable spirit, the *mobility*, to use their own term, of our French neighbours. The quality belongs to their temperament ; it may be acquired by exercise, but much is necessary for it ; I could not, like them, wind myself up to a debating pitch at a moment's notice. By the by, I know not whether I have done it before, but here, at all events, I should wish to expose a vulgar and very inveterate fallacy, almost a universal one. It is reported of Demosthenes that he declared action, or, as we understand the word, gesticulation, to be far and far the most important requisite for an orator. If ever he said any such thing he must have been a fool at that moment, whatever else he might have been for the remainder of his life. But this I was well assured could not be so ; the foolishness of the phrase, together with the authority of it, puzzled me in the extreme, and so I took the trouble to inquire into it. The Greek word is *κίνησις*, — signifying agitation, motion, any thing of a stirring quality. Here, then, is the truth ; it was not action, but emotion, that Demosthenes held to be necessary, and in this all orators will agree with him ; a man must be possessed with his subject or he can never work with it upon his audience.

But I have no reason to regret the time that I spent in this said *café*, although I was no better than a listener there, — a listener, and, as I said before, a commentator also ; this was the main thing, I was conversant with men and manners ; I saw them in their open moods, and under their truth-telling influences ; I watched them in their triumphs, vexations, and disappointments, and I reflected

on every thing before me where I could only find matter for my reflection,— points to receive my aim. On the whole, it was a good school ; I frequented it much, and there it was that I was schooled into no small share of my worldly wisdom.

One poor fellow I knew there, and knew well,— a scholar from Grenoble ; poor indeed, forlorn, and friendless, with nothing but a college reputation to assist him ; unpractised in the world, shabby in dress, vulgar in figure, but wearing a countenance with a soul in it. We were brought together by a mutual bias, and, student-like, as often as we met were sure within five minutes' time to be far in argument, whetting each other's wits continually. In general his spirit was that of melancholy; dark of itself, but vivid, flashing, and foaming to the highest pitch of impassionment when once thoroughly excited ; he was deep in politics, and sure, with such a temperament, to be at one or other of the extremes. An accident determined him. He had received a slight from some nobleman with whom he lived at the time as tutor ; or, at all events, his fancy was full of some such inflammatory matter, and he became, principally I suspect from that motive, a furious republican ; a very monster, breathing fire and sulphur at every word ; so much so, that I could never encounter him while in his mood, and was forced far back towards royalism, as one generally is by the wrath of such fell opposites. Poor fellow ! the last time that I was in Paris I missed him from his accustomed seat, and could hear nothing of him then, nor ever since, although anxious in my inquiries. Happily he is no more ; his was a boiling spirit, and in these hot times all too likely to boil over. It may be, that, with other such ardent souls, his zeal betrayed him into danger,— danger unto death ; and so nothing else remains of him but the record in my memory. That shall last.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I make conjecture that they of this country are cannibals, for I noted that they had among them certain colleges, whereof the companions were nourished up in all laziness, doing naught, but growing to huge obesity, even as they fat bullocks for the slaughter in our own country."—*KLIMM'S VOYAGE BY HOLBERG.*

WHEN I left Paris, I returned to my wallowing in the mire ; in other words, I went to live in college, and was *resident* there — O, how true is the phrase ! — for some six or seven months. This, one would imagine, should have been a ripening time for me, the very summer days of my intellect ; materials were abundant ; motives, resources, and objects in all variety ; libraries, leisure, the society of learned men, immunity from household cares and the anxieties of this world, all these advantages were within my reach, but I used them to little purpose, and should have neglected them altogether if I had chosen to follow the example of my "comates and fellows." It was said by James the First, that, if he were not a king, he would fain be a fellow of a college ; I am rather curious to know where he got his idea of the blessedness of that condition ; certainly it was not from the knowledge of the truth, nor from observation of the thing itself ; even in the matter of study I believe that very few of his Majesty's subjects are so little addicted to it as these same fellows. A man who has bestowed half his life in mastering the classics or mathematics shuts himself up very commonly in his stronghold ; he is unwilling to venture forth from it and prove himself in the open field, where he is conscious of his weakness. He has got together a heap of symbols,—mere counters,—and with these he calculates most dot-

ingly ; but the substance of these shadows, the sterling gold of the intellect, coin current through the realm, he is as far as ever from acquiring ; all his wealth is in paper, — paper, like bad scrip, marked with a high nominal amount, but of no value either in use or in exchange, repudiated in real traffic. He cannot condescend to become a child, and learn rudiments ; he meddles not with matters wherein men of a very ordinary rate have twenty times his strength, without a tithe of his reputation.

The truth is, that it is not by means of facilities but through difficulties that the mind must grow up to greatness ; we may saunter all our lives along the dead, rich level of an open country or library, and never, in either ease, see or know any more than the ground immediately around us, or the book actually in hand ; we should toil, and toil upwards, really exerting ourselves, if we would get to a commanding height. In the intellect, as in the body, it is not mere food that can strengthen us, unless exercise coöperate with it ; hence the importance of a profession to men of letters. Walter Scott tells us that his fancy took its best flights after a day spent in plodding law studies. Your professed literary man, if he be nothing else, is generally a poor creature, nerveless, feeble, and ineffective ; familiarity is disregard ; he lives among his objects till he is callous against all impressions from them. The dweller among shows and spectacles is the last person in the world to make a point of going to see them ; the owner of a picturesque domain is indifferent to its beauties ; the fellow of a college, the *possessor*, though not the master, of all means and appliances for learning, will seldom take the trouble to stretch out his hand for their attainment. He is a mere trustee ; the legal owner, indeed, but not the beneficial one. It was so with most of us absolutely, and with myself in some degree ; it was like the sight of an election dinner,

the plenty of it turned my stomach, — *inopem me copia fecit.*

I passed the greater part of the winter in college, and the whole ensuing spring; I promised myself fine things, — books, sciences, and conquests multifarious ; but on the whole, at my time's end, I was in the condition of the man in Horace, —

“ Si quæret quid agam, dic multa et pulchra minantem
Vivere nec recte nec suaviter.”

It is only the strong mind that can live in idleness, — in apparent idleness, I mean, — independently of regular external impulses and attractions ; that can stand without support. As for me, I found myself in the very castle of indolence ; there was a fascination in the atmosphere ; an enervating, lethargic spirit, that kept my soul abed, idly sluggardizing ; awake and in a fine glorious morning, with an expanse of great scenery in view, but yet unwilling to stir, and withal comfortless and restless in its abeyance. However, as the spring wore out, the temperature of my mind began gradually, with the season, to wax warm ; I panted for enlargement ; it was not that I would live for the world ; as yet I had no such nobleness of ambition, but I was anxious, at all events, to live in it ; to see something more of men, if only that I might be enabled to deal the better with books, — to separate the chaff of them from the grain by the shrewd, stirring winnow of experience. I neither wanted nor waited for any better reason ; upon this I took up my staff and set off again as a wayfarer.

I went into Devonshire. It is a glorious country, and the glory of it infused itself into my spirit ; the embers were stirred, and the fire within me again fully kindled. Moreover, apart from the effect of scenery and communings with nature, I had now many advantages that were withholden from me in my former journeys ;

I had the command of my mind ; I knew the touch of its main-spring, and could start it at any moment. This was a vast resource ; only the practice was not so habitual to me, nor the energy of my will so decisive, as to insure me the full effect of my instruments ; so much I had to learn, and it was long ere I had perfected my lesson.

I went alone, and had no book with me but a Bible. In the first place, I presumed that my own thoughts, with the aspect of a fresh country and the incidents of a wayfarer, would occupy me sufficiently, and in this I had scarcely overrated myself ; but I had also a still higher motive.

For a long time I had been in a state of indifference as to religion,—blind, stupidly rather than wilfully, in the stupid blindness of inadvertence. It may be that I had my turns and returns of religious feeling. The spirit of the Gospel was glorified to me in its humility, and charity, and simplicity ; I had glowed, and softened, and wept repeatedly under its influences. But then I had been given to understand that it was not these things, but rather certain speculative doctrines, that constituted Christianity ; that it was better in frame than in hand, according to the phrase of the picture-dealers ; that its essence was in its making up, its quality in its forms and doctrines, and therein I was as reckless as the good old Roman, Gallio, himself. I cared for none of those things ; and therefore, as the substance was never offered to me, neither would I have the husk. I rejected it not irreverently, but unregardingly. Besides, custom had made me callous. The notion of the heads of colleges, and of our great public schools, seems to be much like that of Pharaoh :—“Ye are idle, ye are idle ; therefore would ye do service to the Lord” ; only that he considered such service as the pretext, and they as the

employment, of idleness. Our striplings are sent to chapel that they may be out of the way of mischief; as if there could be any greater mischief than the stagnation, and consequent corruption, of the thoughts ; any greater impiety than to shuffle together the principles of good and evil ; to carry the spirit of profaneness into sacred things, and not the spirit of sacredness into profane things ; the last it is impossible to insure, but we can cut off many occasions, and this among them, from the former.

I happened, one day, in an idle humor, to read a sermon of Barrow, and was impressed deeply by it, —to the depth of meditation. I pondered, searched, and considered it for many days together ; of course not wholly, but at intervals. Well, I thought at last, I have tried many things in my time, and religion, too, shall have its trial ; it is blessedness to a multitude, and why not to me also ?

But I felt that hitherto it had no chance with me ; my mind was overgrown and overrun with all sorts of plants, weeds, and flowers, save only with the herb grace. It could hardly show itself at all, and, if at all, only to be stifled and choked up. This I set myself to remedy, —and how ? I knew that in the way of vice those are perfect in it who give themselves wholly to it, and I wished to see whether, by the same means, I might not make the same advances in the walk of virtue. To this end I abandoned all my other books, forswore my custom of reading, withdrew myself far away to secret haunts from all means and occasions of it, took only my Bible with me, and to that dedicated myself wholly.

I am astonished at this moment, how, as I was then framed, I could have brought myself to resolve so wisely. The wisdom of the head and the devotion of the heart, *if both had been perfect in me*, could yet have counselled

me no better. It was a flash of lightning out of the cloud, sudden, and but for a moment, yet it showed me the path before me as clearly as in broad day ; and as I devised it well and piously, so also did I execute it faithfully ; anywhere and everywhere, on the bank, by the roadside, under the deep woodland shade, by the retirement of the secret stream, and on the craggy heights of Dartmoor, — the Bible, the Bible, and still the Bible ; that and nothing but that. This was my one subsistence, — my manna in the desert. I fed upon it spiritually and heartily, I waxed upon the food in grace, and in all godliness of growth.

In the course of my expedition, I passed through a place called Hatherley. I am not quite sure of the name, but it was a village, or small market-town, a good deal north of Tavistock. I reached it on a Sunday evening in summer, — a season to every Christian soul, in the country particularly, full of feeling. At the town's end I observed a crowd gathered together, and, on going up to them, found that they were standing round a preacher, who was addressing them from a mound on the road-side ; — a man evidently of humble station, poor, tattered, and fervently religious, — one who would certainly be called, and possibly might be, a fanatic. He preached to them for some time, rudely, indeed, and somewhat wildly, but with the utmost earnestness of emphasis and gesticulation ; when suddenly some wretched fellows began to make a stir, interrupted him repeatedly, and at last were so heartless as to throw stones at him. Their brutality wrought at once upon his sensitiveness ; the poor man was struck down by it in a moment ; he said not a word of expostulation, but descended, seemingly in alarm, passed through the midst of them, and went his way quietly. I was moved to take his place ; an impulse that I could not control overruled me so to

do. I got upon the mound, abandoned myself to my course of spirit, and with a fulness and flow of language such as I had never before known, I set forth to them the flagrancy of their injustice, and horrible heinousness of their sin ; insisting upon many topics, — the treatment of our Saviour by the Jews, with a variety of others likely to be suggested by the circumstances. My words were not without effect upon them ; the suddenness of my apparition struck them, and my fervency strengthened the impression. I left them under its influence, and went on my own path, rejoicing inwardly, as one conscious of a good, and great, and truly Christian act. And, indeed, it was no less ; I had given proof of a manliness above my years, a spirit of true Christian fortitude. I had shown myself superior to ridicule, trampled it under foot, and crushed it into the very dust. I had felt the force of virtuous energy, and found that it was all-sufficient. The effect survived the effort. It was not merely a momentary glow, but an abiding color, — nor a color merely, but a deep-penetrating dye. I retain it to this moment.

In other respects, also, my journey was of great benefit to me. I had lived so many months in college that I had begun to conform myself in spirit to that most ungenial quality of existence. Every thing was provided for me. A set of delightful rooms, sumptuous dinners, prospects, and pleasure-grounds, such as many noblemen might envy, — all these appurtenances of luxury I might call my own ; and they were my own in every other sense, save only the truest and the happiest one, — that of domestic ownership and interest. O, for the dinner of herbs where love is ! How often did I sigh for it, amidst the hateful luxuries of our table, — the *opes irritamenta malorum*, — garnished, as they were, with envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. One lives there, for the most part, only for one's self, and to one's self, and

in one's self. Companionship is not friendship. The affections perish for want of exercise. We were never called upon to consult, as in a domestic family, the convenience of others, to forego our own comforts, to feel the blessedness of mutual concessions ; from the disuse we lost the faculty ; the centripetal power prevailed, we sunk into ourselves ; in short, we were all selfishness. Heaven grant, if I should ever again be brought to such a condition, that I may become a stone at once, rather than a stone-hard, a blockish man.

But at last I broke the silken fetters wherewith, like the poor worm, I had been enveloping myself, to the preclusion of all sympathy. I went out among my fellow-men to a far country, and a most delicious one. I studied as much as possible to forget myself ; to enter into the interests of others ; to make myself, as far as might be, a partner in their hopes, and fears, and affections. It is only by thus mixing one's self with the feelings of other men that one can have a chance of foregoing one's egotism, of getting far enough from our proper selves to take a full view and make a just estimate of our own character. Accordingly, whomsoever I might meet, great or small, parson, farmer, or laborer, I made a point of talking with them, and that freely and familiarly. I repudiated my college, and became a member of the great human university,—a citizen of the world ; and so was my spirit warmed, my faculties quickened, and all my soul expanded. Besides, there was the communion of nature. I used to walk early and late, and rest myself, like the other universalist, Pan, during the heat of the midday. Consequently I hardly ever missed the sunset and sunrise, and never once did I contemplate them without emotion at the thought that I was a portion of the great nature, an emanation of the universal spirit. Contemplations like these, together with my readings and medita-

tions of the Bible, wrought powerfully upon my disposition. Impressions, forceful in themselves, and repeated often, must needs sink deep into the soul. I returned a new man. The flashiness and glancingness of my spirit had been softened into an even tone, subdued into solemnity.

This excursion was a crisis in my life ; a new principle originated from it, and thence a new development. Before I entered upon the journey, I was indeed a stripling in mind, but yet one of no contemptible resources ; I was master of much learning, and of divers good intellectual methods. I was familiar with the ancient languages, and had an acquaintance not merely superficial with such modern ones as are commonly studied in this country. I knew something of several sciences, enough for general views and analogies, — enough also to talk and argue upon them without absurdity. Moreover, by the favor of a good memory, I had all sorts of facts at my command, — historical, statistical, and social ; and this is of no small advantage for the enjoyment of society. I had withal (to pass from the acquisitions of the mind to the mind itself) a certain energy of will, in no very high degree, but sufficient to insure my proficiency in any walk of discipline. I was ardent and enthusiastic, with an intuitive perception and judgment of whatever was beautiful and poetical, as well as a most exquisite delight in every thing of the kind. Lately, to all these good gifts I had added the power of controlling my thoughts, of speeding and exercising them at will by the management of certain physical faculties, and one especially, — that of the breath. Upon this all men will be skeptical, most absolutely incredulous ; and yet I am well assured that, with any one who will try the method fairly, it will be as successful as with myself. Not that I wish here to assert that there is any thing in common, any thing essen-

tial at least, between the breath and the mind of man. I have no occasion to prove so much :—

"What needs the bridge be wider than the flood?"

All that I do assert is this, that the breath is a moving power acting upon the intellect, probably through the nervous system, as the blast and vapor act on the steam-engine ; though, in fact, they have nothing in common with its mechanism, or its peculiar powers. It is by the exercise of the breath that the machinery of the mind is set in motion ; that the course of our ideas is directed ; that energy is kept up, inertness impelled, and listlessness dissipated. I have many hints and half-perceptions on the subject,—a chaos awaiting its creation. It is a rich vein in psychology, and one I am confident that might be worked to prodigious advantage. However, such as it is, I leave it to those who have more leisure than myself to employ their learning upon it.

Here was a good store of materials, and, more than that, the outline of a good design ; but, withal, it was grievously imperfect,—a thing, as it then stood, of insignificance. I wanted much for its perfection, but what I wanted principally was a pervading and prevailing principle, whereby the whole fabric of my mind might hold together, and work together ; instead of standing as it was now, disjointed and out of sorts, feeble, concertless, and ineffective.

Within a few months of my return from Devonshire, I was at a friend's house in the country. It was a large, irregular, and somewhat curious old place, delightful for a dreamer and saunterer ; a late owner of it had been a book-collector, and a suit of several rooms had been given up to the library. There I established my headquarters. I could have lounged about in it for ever, reading, noting, and imagining ; such was my usual prac-

tice when I was at large among books, but here I did something better. The last volume that I took down was Law's Serious Call. I had looked into it before ; it had been highly recommended to me, but, in spite of all authority and truth, and my own Christian profession, I hated it at first sight — the author as well as the book — with a Satanic sinfulness of hatred. The fact is, that in those times my notions of religion had seldom gone any deeper than the outward decencies of life ; as for vital Christianity, I had no concern with it, nor any wish to entertain it. I was abhorrent at the very idea of it ; as much so as one would naturally be at the idea of cutting one's self to the quick with the knife that one uses merely for paring one's nails, and bringing them to evenness and order. But of late another spirit had come over me. My acquaintance with the Bible, my long and entire diet upon it, had corrected my evil humors, and altered me most powerfully. Upon this change I took up the Serious Call and read it earnestly. Never was a book so energetic. I seemed to have become a pure spirit, and to be conversing with such another, — so clear, so immediate, so forceful, was the truth that shone upon me. Every word spoke to me as an oracle from God. I took the volume out of the room, and strayed with it into some meadows belonging to the house, covered with old oaks, and unconscious of the sun. There I threw myself in the shade, forgot all things else, and made a long meal of righteousness.

When I recovered from the surprise of the revelation, for such it really was, I felt astonished that it should never before have been revealed to me. The Romanists were wont to disguise the living spirit of Christ in a dead language ; to mumble their words out, not for edification, but for superstition only ; and this was imputed to them *for unrighteousness*, — perhaps justly, — but, alas ! the

language of our own liturgy is almost equally dead, and must always remain so, until it be animated by the living spirit of its preachers, the vital example of its ministers. This is the profligacy of our church. It is true that every Sunday in the year, and in almost every parish throughout England, a man gets up into a reading-desk, and reads some portions of the Gospel, and afterwards exalts himself into the pulpit, that he may preach his own doctrine from his own pride of place, leaving the blessed Bible beneath him ; moreover, this same sermon that he preaches may haply, as it often is, be as evangelical, in ostentation at least, as the very Gospel itself ; but who is to believe him ? When a mountebank at a fair tells us that such a stuff is poison, and, at the word, drinks a bottle of it off, — or that this is the elixir of life, while he is known to have kept it closed up from year to year, and never to have drunk a drop of it, — who is so foolish as to believe his promises against the faith of his own practice ? — *Quære peregrinum.* And so with our ministers of the Gospel. If there be blasphemy in the designation, as I fear there may be, Heaven forgive me for it ! They tell us to love our neighbour as ourselves ; to practise entire humility, and charity, and self-denial ; to abjure the world and all its vanities ; pressing forward for the crown of righteousness, and looking to that only. And they warn us rightly. Suppose Christianity to be true, and all such doctrine, together with all such books as Law's *Serious Call*, must be true likewise. No reasonable believer can doubt it. For every word of it we have the express warrant of the Gospel. But words cost little ; it is only while it is worn that the shoe pinches us. And now look to the example of these successors of our Saviour in the ministry. Is there one in a hundred of them who really takes up the cross and abjures the world, who makes *himself* a home-missionary, who does sacri-

fice to his faith, who denies himself comforts that he may the better administer to the necessities of his poor brethren, who dines without meat that his neighbour may have bread and starve not ? Is there one such in a hundred ? I say it confidently, no ; hardly in a thousand.

And what is the consequence ? Why, simply this : unthinking people, those who cannot or will not examine for themselves, and who, if they have any religion at all, must take it wholly upon trust, can have no trust in such ministers, can see no trustworthiness in them. They say, and very naturally, — “ Here is a man who tells us so and so, and does quite otherwise, —

‘ Shows us the steep and thorny way to heaven,
And reckts not his own road.’

He preaches self-denial and contempt of riches, and yet we see him every day lolling in his carriage, living like any other gentleman, and bringing up his family in the very practices condemned by him, *verbo tenus*, as most pestilently dangerous. It is his business to know the truth, he has nothing else to do ; doubtless, in a matter of such moment, he has informed himself thoroughly upon it. It is clear, then, that, as long as he is in the pulpit, he is acting a solemn farce, upholding a piece of ceremonial pageantry. However, let us do for our sakes just as he does for his own. We cannot get far into danger if we only follow, for our religion, a man so learned in its doctrine, and so prudent in all his other concerns.”

I know that it has been said, and repeated a thousand times, that clergymen are not bound to be better than any other kind of men ; that we are all under the same obligation, — amenable to the same standard of righteousness. Undoubtedly, it is the duty of every one of us to go as far forward as he can towards perfection. But there are degrees of glory. We have the sun, moon, and stars. We must improve each his talents, but we

can improve only those bestowed upon us. It is only where much has been given that much will be required of us.

Now I say that the clergyman is in this predicament ; much is given to him, — a treasure of many talents. He is educated for his office, appropriated as a holy and a chosen vessel for the service of the Lord ; he declares upon his ordination that he believes himself to be moved by the Spirit to undertake the ministry ; he is removed from worldly traffic, from the solicitation of daily gain, that pestilence of the soul that walketh openly at noon-day ; so much the less is his temptation, and the greater his guilt, if he swerve at all from innocence. The business of one man is this thing, and of another that ; the utterance of holy doctrine, and the example of a holy life, is the business of the clergyman. His occupation is as high above all others, as the heaven is above the earth ; so likewise should be his regard for it, his devotion unto it. But I do not insist upon so much ; I am content to waive the difference. All that I require from the clergyman is merely this ; that he should be as much superior in the exercise of his profession to other men, as those other men are to him each in his particular craft, — tailors, shoemakers, or mechanics ; and this they must be, if they would make their livelihood of their calling. Surely it is not unfair to expect as much devotion, and, consequently, as much proficiency, in the exercise of things spiritual, as in that of things temporal. The clergyman, at all events, should be the last to gainsay the expectation, to refuse the proof of his apprenticeship. They have offered their services voluntarily ; let them only fulfil their offer ; else it shall be their disgrace, and, I believe truly, their damnation.

And yet you still tell me, Clericus, that no higher measure of holiness can be required of the clergyman

than of any indifferent man,—that he is under no special calling to be righteous. Say you so, indeed, Clericus? Well, it may be that you are right. But surely you will not say that he is under no special obligation to preach the Gospel, and insist upon the duties enjoined by it, however he may stand obliged to execute them? “No, I admit that,—he must be a teacher and a preacher at all events.” Allow me then to ask, How is it possible that a man should preach zealously, and fervently, and effectually, unless he believe the Gospel that he preaches; and not only believes it, but does it? Shall he insist upon his own damnation? Shall he himself set the standard high, when he knows that he cannot escape hell-torments unless actually and in truth it be set most miserably low? Shall he be able to embrace the truth freely, fully, and fervently, with all the fetters of his sinfulness bound fast around him? No, surely. But still he must preach the word. Then, as he is called specially to do this, he is likewise called specially to do what is necessary to this; in a word, to practise what he preaches; for example in life, as well as in grammar, is the soul of instruction. Preaching prevails not. For all good purposes, man is imitative rather than auscultative;

“For, in such business,
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
More learned than their ears.”

But it is otherwise ordered in our establishment. I looked again and again, and through the main body of the church I could observe no other spirit at work than that of mere worldliness,—a sanctified idolatry of Mammon. In nineteen cases out of twenty, the *persona ecclesiaz* was indeed a mere mask, and worn carelessly and slovenly; a mask of duplicity,—a *parson impersonnée*. Certainly, in this respect, our clergymen are nowise am-

bitious ; they cleave unto the very dust ; they are unconscious of any thing so wild as the aspiration after angelic sublimities ; they follow the steps of the apostles at a most reverential distance ; they have no wish, not they, to trench upon the attributes of the saints. On the contrary, like good fathers of a family, they leave the best of things, the things spiritual and heavenly, to their children in the church ; and content themselves, good, pious souls ! to feed upon garbage, to stay their appetites with the offals of this world. And their prudence is at least equal to their piety ; for a proof of it, we have only to mark their practice on a single other point. They read the Scriptures every Sunday, and know so much of them as to be aware that the way unto salvation is strait ; why then should we straiten it still more, ay, and perhaps encumber it altogether, by our competition ? better leave the course clear and the race open for such as are without surplices, and so much the readier to run it. Again, they are well persuaded that to teach by example is mere childishness ; that learning made easy is only another name for idleness ; and therefore they instruct their disciples much in the fashion of the mathematicians, proposing to them the practice of Christianity as a problem, and leaving them to work it out by themselves ; or, at most, just pointing the direction, and forbearing to lead them on along it, lest they should lose the merit of their attainments. The church, as they well know, is built upon a rock, and, on that assurance, they repose and pass their lives in it most slumberously. To speak plainly, they make a milch cow of their religion, and, to be sure, they fatten on its milk most gloriously.

I saw that there was no chance for Christianity till such grievances as these were remedied. As long as the eye is dark, the whole body must be in darkness. If the master be no better than his disciple, how shall we hope

for any advancement? As the Spaniards say, "The devil hides himself behind the cross, and thence he must first be driven." The church is in a state of lethargic plethora bordering upon apoplexy. We may remedy it either by letting blood * or by dieting it more sparingly. I prefer the latter of these methods, — the subtraction of the fuel, — to the lading out of the boiling water. The church must first be humbled, that so, finally, it may be exalted, and that from a sure base. But this, though easily said, is indeed very hardly done. Of all people in the world, your parsons are the worst patients. The very lawyers, those hacks of worldliness, as a clergyman would call them, are, in comparison, miracles of magnanimity in the hour of trial and of privation. Within these last few years, the pleaders and sessions' practitioners have been divorced from the better half of their income by acts of legislature. A man who could have supported his family a dozen years back has now much ado to provide for his house-rent from the profits of his profession; yet they are content to suffer in silence; the *gemitus columbae* is the only expression of their agony. They see that it is for the public good, or, at all events, by the public will, and therefore their private loss is endured by them uncomplainingly. So with the other professions, — with government places, military and naval offices, — how many of them either abolished or abridged. But patience and resignation are not to be found among the features of clerical Christianity. Talk but of touching the tithes, or reducing a bishop's income to that of ten general officers, and, immediately, sacrilege is abroad! hell is let loose upon the earth! it is all over with Christianity! And, after all, what is this mighty matter? Let

* In other words, by throwing the superfluity of its veins into other channels.

us take them at their own estimate ; a parson, when he is dealing with his brother, presumes that he is liberal enough if he requite his services with a stipend of some eighty or ninety pounds. Why should they fare better from strangers ? *Quid faciant hostes audent cum talia fratres ?* These are hard words that the parsons give us ; but happily, in our times, they have neither stake nor firebrand to back them. Superstition is not the order of the day. The old witch may swear her heart out, and get nothing for her pains but the laughter of the very populace. If the cries of the monks and friars had carried it, we should have known nothing of the Reformation. Nor shall we know any thing of Christianity, if we suffer its voice to be overpowered by the bellowing of these fat bulls of Bashan, these furnaces of the flame of priesthood.

They have been wiser elsewhere than with us. On the continent, with a very few exceptions, the church has been stripped of its pageantry, reduced to simplicity, curtailed of its train and its lawn sleeves, and so enabled to do its work as an efficient handmaid of the Lord. There, if one goes into a village and inquires for the clergyman, one finds him to be a man of poverty and humble piety, working often with his own hands, as did the chief of the apostles, during the intervals of his function ; a man who can insist on self-denial, and has no need to blush at his own rejection of it ; preaching the pure, evident Gospel, instead of perplexing his readers and amusing himself with all kinds of subtleties, unprofitable for all else save only for his private advancement ; after the fashion of those worldly-minded divines — divines, nay, rather divinators, pretenders to knowledge, jugglers and players on the word — who, for their own vainglory, will be unravelling the text of Scripture, and taking single lines and sentences, that they may make them

into snares for the unwary, for those who are zealous of the truth, and would fain press forward to it more earnestly than befits the interest — of their pastors, shall I say ? no — of their trafficking, and calculating, and canny drovers. The fact is, that the earliness of our Reformation has ruined us. It was forced fruit, and therefore, as somebody has said of the Russians, it became rotten ere it was ripe. The people were not prepared for it. They were dazzled by an imperfect light, a light just shining out of darkness. They had been the slaves of priestcraft too long to dare any thing so noble as to vindicate Christ, and the Gospel, and themselves, into full liberty. The process of the wine was forced on before the fermentation had gone far enough ; hence the vapidly, and flatness, and deadness of our quality. Look only to Belgium, and Holland, and France, to Switzerland and Germany, where full intelligence and experience prepared the plan of their Reformation. Look, and see, and admire the difference.

But this is the affair of the people, and not mine individually. For my part, I want nothing but the Gospel, I lack no service of the parson. He has never yet come to visit me, as he should have done, for his duty's sake, and I care not to go to him. It is only from habit and association, and for example's sake, that I am a church-attendant. I could do better for myself at home in privacy and with my books. On the whole, then, the greater the general abuse, the greater also is my especial blessing, in that I am exempted from it. Yet cannot I forbear, but that I must lift my voice up for the Gospel and for the nation. Woe upon the actors of such iniquity ! woe upon its abettors ! woe, lastly, upon its sufferers !

CHAPTER XV.

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties!" — HAMLET.

FOR myself, my whole mind, my entire moral being, was altered by these my meditations. From this time I became a lover of the Gospel, a humble searcher after truth, a thirster for the pure sources. The light of the Bible had illumined me, and by it I saw the utter insignificance of all worldly things. This consciousness improved my intellect in a most wonderful degree. Before, I had been weak and vacillating, blown about with every wind, incapable of any strong fixedness of purpose, whereas now I became wholly independent and self-sufficient. I rose above the natural man, and immeasurably above the worldly man. My judgment was free. Thenceforward I looked into the very essences of things. The follies of fashion and opinion, the sarcasms of the small mind, the sneers of the puny worldling, I regarded no more than I should have done the mouthings of an ape or the mockings of an idiot. I had obtained the one thing needful for my confirmation in faith and intellect. I threw myself on my great resource, the sense of an overruling Providence, and I needed nothing more to carry me over all my difficulties. I acted, as it were, in the confidence of the Almighty, the confidence of faith, the genuine *πίστις*, the love that casteth out fear. By the by, it has often occurred to me that this Greek word *πίστις* should be rendered trust, and not faith, generally, if not universally, through the New Testament; and so of its derivatives, each according to its kind. I have a notion that the change would be a powerful one, the sub-

stitute better than the original ; that it would put to flight a whole legion of miscreate and air-drawn phantoms, if once adopted into our service. But I must leave the inquiry to theologists. I have neither means nor leisure to prosecute it.

Here was a new development, and one not so much of change as of regeneration ; it was the keystone to the arch, the crown of the whole fabric, whereby, to use the language of St. Paul, it was framed together, and fixed together, and strengthened in its unity through the love of Christ ; this was the one thing needful to me. My spirit naturally, or, at all events, very early, had been highly sensitive and shrinking ; this quality had lived with me, and grown with me, and seemed likely to die with me, although it had been much modified and occasionally overruled by the various modes of discipline set forth by me heretofore ; but these modes consisted, for the most part, of acts rather than of habits, and, even when they had grown into habits, those habits themselves depended for their exercise upon my energy and animal spirits, and, as often as these resources failed, they could not but fail likewise. Hitherto I had only cisterns of water, broken cisterns ; they might serve me for a time, but nothing could serve me fully, and constantly, and certainly, but the living fountain alone. The regulator must be steady, and independent, and sovereign, as compared with the things regulated, else is it a vain show ; such a power I had long wanted and now found it.

I have read somewhere in Rousseau a description of the change that came over him after a year's residence in Paris. His scorn of human pusillanimity, his indignation at the viciousness and treachery and meanness that encountered him at every turn, wrought him to such a pitch of spirit that he surpassed his own consciousness, and could hardly believe in his identity. I was affected in

the same way, although under very different auspices. My perusal of Law's Serious Call, my conviction of its truths, my rumination and gradual assimilation of them, had endowed me with a force and energy hitherto altogether foreign to me ; I was conscious of my elevation, I felt as one raised above his wont to the very height of heaven. The virtue thus vouchsafed to me acted with a wondrously tonic power through every nerve of my system ; it quickened, animated, and invigorated me ; I felt penetrated with forcefulness and elasticity. At last I learned the meaning of the poet ; I felt fully and thoroughly what it was

“To strengthen man with his own mind” ; a feeling that I had known before only partially and imperfectly.

From this time I began to walk and think and act as in the presence and under the protection of the Almighty. I felt that entire confidence so nobly described by Bacon as given to the dog by the presence of his master, and to man by that of his Maker. I withdrew from time to time to a safe distance from the crowd ; I took my vantage-ground upon a height, and thence I could make a just estimate of the things beneath me. I corrected my earthly charts by heavenly observations ;* and as I raised myself upward, this earth, with all its objects and concerns, sunk to a mere speck of insignificance ; I regarded the things of the world, the exigencies of my daily life, as things to be provided indeed, to be sought out and used, but no way to be admired or coveted ; I was filled with the spirit of indifference, and thence of independence ; I became indeed regenerate ; the feeling of the Divinity had expelled the feeling of the natural man and supplied its place. But the great effect of this change, in regard

* Coleridge.

of my relations with other men, was the superiority to opinion resulting from it. I cared no more for the shrugs and sneers of fashion, the expositulations of mere custom, than for the grimaces of a harlequin ; instead of shrinking from the sting of the nettle, I grasped it at once boldly, and crushed it into dissolution ; satire and sarcasm wrought upon me as the stings of a mosquito upon steel, —

“ They might jest

Till their own scorn returned to them unnoted.”

I went my way, passing through the midst of them evenly, calmly, and confidently. I regarded no man’s person ; authority was like an old fable to me ; I had hardened my face as a flint, and my brow as a brow of adamant ; I looked to essences rather than forms, substances rather than shadows ; I was admitted to an inner view ; I had become an esoteric disciple of the truth.

I am aware that this self-assumed superiority to opinion may be, and often is, a thing of danger ; dangerous in its crudeness and fermentation, although in its perfection most blessed. For myself, I felt many times, that, when any great principle was at stake, nothing would have been too much for my effrontery ; I could have used the pen and sword, ay, or even the dagger, indifferently ; but that was not the fault of the spirit, but rather of the crudeness and perversity of the nature wherein it wrought ; in itself the faculty is most excellent. This, and this only — the superiority to opinion, the prevalence over vulgar notions — constitutes true greatness ; greatness is grandeur, and grandeur is superior height.

Here, then, was the end of my intellectual trials and wanderings ; I was anchored in a safe harbour ; my latest experiment served me once for all, and superseded the need of others. To be permanent, to dwell as an abiding guest, is the prerogative of religion when it is once truly and thoroughly admitted. I found the proof

of it ; I had tried many other methods of intellectual discipline, and most of them had been useful for a time ; ay, and more than that, they had been often lasting in their effects, even when in their operations, from my own unsteadiness of method, they were precarious and irregular ; still, however long I might have employed them, they could never have given to my intellect its full development ; they were like especial gymnastic exercises, calculated some to strengthen the arms, others the wrist, others to open the chest, but powerless to renew and to reframe the general constitution, the entire fabric of the body. They were makeshifts, of a vicarious and substitutionary quality, like the efforts of a blind man to supply the default of sight by the preternatural acuteness of his touch or hearing. In the words of Hudibras, to

“ Set up community of senses,
And chop and change intelligences.”

Much may be done in this way, but much more must always remain undone. The use of such aids without religion is like the use of artificial heat and light to the exclusion of their great natural fountain ; it may serve our purposes for a while, and in particular circumstances, but it is liable to crosses and disturbances, and all kinds of failure. The sun above us, the sure, perennial, inexhaustible source, is our only safety ; that sun is religion, the great imparter to the soul of warmth, and light, and efficacy. It may be obscured for a while ; at intervals, clouds and darkness may overshadow it ; it is liable, as regarded in its effects, to the change of temperature and seasons, but it is fixed in the firmament ; its influence, wherever it extends, even although unobserved, is yet always in operation ; there it is, the perpetual and unfailing source of health, and strength, and gladness. Take the testimony of Cicero :—“ *Omnia profecto animus cum se a caelestibus rebus referet ad terrestres excelsiva*

magnificentiusque et dicat et sentiat." I know it well, it is not for this cause, principally, or such as this, that religion is to be commended ; thus to praise her is to give her but a very scant proportion of her praise ; she has higher merits by far, more angelic attributes. Her primary and peculiar office is not to strengthen the intellect, but to purify and elevate the soul, to open the eyes of those who were blind to Gospel truths, to soothe the contrite heart, to loose out of their captivity the poor sufferers heretofore in bondage to fleshly ills and infirmities. This is the proper orbit of religion, the path wherein she moves, but yet not the limit of her influence ; that influence, "that radiance and collateral light," she may shed, and does shed, far beyond her peculiar range ; and, besides, her especial functions have had each of them a host of expounders ; theirs is the harvest, and, as for me, I put not my sickle into their field ; I am writing on the intellect ; and for the intellect's sake I do most heartily commend the use and exercise of religion, feeling that even here its efficacy is great, although in a comparatively small thing.

Here, then, it is to the mere intellectualist that I address myself. He may fancy that he is independent of religion, that he wants nothing of its aids, comforts, or assurances ; that he has a sufficient reserve within himself as well for his advancement in his calling as for his amusement and health of mind ; and true it is that he has, in the cultivation of his intellect, a great source of satisfaction ; true, also, he may do something in this way without even a thought of religion ; he may do much if he be a man of high energies and talents ; but if he can do much without it, gracious heavens ! what will he not do with it ?

Religion is the only thing that contains within itself both the stimulating and soothing quality ; that quickens us to energy, and then recreates us with repose. Hence

it seems made, as it were, for the residence, and, more than that, for the very atmosphere, of the immortal soul, supplying what is exhausted, and repairing what is worn and wasted, in it.

Unhappily, very many men are fond of intellectual pursuits, and, withal, either downright infidels or careless about religion. In such cases, it is useless to insist on duty ; they deny the principle, and, of course, would repudiate our deductions from it ; but it is yet open to us to appeal to their prejudices and predilections, and possibly with good effect ; to show them, if they choose not the better part, that of loving religion for its own sake, that they would do wisely nevertheless to study and to cultivate it for the sake of the advantages that it offers for the attainment of their own objects. Its primary use is inestimable ; if they are regardless of that, its secondary one is the thing next in value, although at an immeasurable distance. Strange that there should be men found, and learned men too, to vaunt with the irreligious poet the *edita doctrinâ sapientum templa serena*, as strongholds and vantage-grounds whence to look down complacently on the errors and vexations of mankind ; and that those same men, in the prosecution of that same purpose, should withhold themselves from the church of God, — the *templum in modum arcis*, — the blessed heights of religion. It is certain that the success of our intellectual exertions depends not so much upon our laboriousness, or our opportunities, or our capacity, as upon the spirit of our enterprise, — the cheerfulness, and clearness, and elevation of mind wherewith that enterprise is taken. Now this quality may be imparted, it is true, from elsewhere, but then only fitfully and partially ; it is from religion alone that it can come lastingly and in perfection ; in this latter there is a balancing power as well as an impelling one ; we move straightly and steadily under its direction,

and so it must be a strange thing if we fail to advance rapidly. We may say of it, and much more truly, what has been said of metaphysics by an eminent foreign writer, *Tali denique splendore animum afficit, ut sibi ipse præluceat ad nanciscendum primi opificis similitudinem.*

I had found myself a fixed point, a *primum stabile*. I had learned, in the expressive phrase of the French, *m'orienter*. As often as I was at a loss, puzzled, perplexed, or harassed in my daily pilgrimage through life, I had only to turn myself to the east, to the point of the blessed sun's rise, and thenceforward all was clearness and simplicity to me ; my doubts and difficulties would vanish as though they had never existed ; I had begun to put my trust in my Maker, and I was sure that I should never be confounded.

But here I would ask a moment's leave on my own personal account. Let no one imagine that I am assuming credit for myself as a thoroughly religious man ; far from it ; my principles, I am sorry to say, have showed themselves but too little in practice. I can see the truth, and acknowledge it, and honor it, and condemn what is contrary to it, but never yet have I had the courage to labor as I should do to attain it. I am poor and beggarly with all my opportunities to acquire the true riches ; I am utterly unable to profess that I have abjured the world and embraced the cross of Christ ; therefore I am no true Christian. As far as outward appearances go, there is, perhaps, little to choose between my fellows — mere worldlings — and myself ; I have lived, and continue to live, much like other men of my own means and station ; some sacrifices I may have made, but none of magnitude. I have denied myself divers trimmings and garnishing superfluities, that I might the better minister to the necessities of those who needed what I could spare ; but

the morality of any thinking heathen would have prompted him to as much. It is not, then, from any merits of my own, from the recommendation of my Christian charity, that I can hope for my acceptance. So much for outward acts and observances of righteousness. I have failed in them sadly, fallen most lamentably short of the just measure ; and in this my outward conduct has been nothing more than the exponent of my inward spirit ; my religion has been occasional only, and my carelessness general. I have neglected to keep my lamp burning ; to feed and maintain the flame whence, and whence only, the soul of man can be strengthened, and tempered, and refined to the fineness of pure silver. I have regarded the light of Christianity as one may regard a fixed star, — admiringly, but not feelingly. I have not been zealous, above all things, to prepare and sanctify my soul as a temple of the Lord.

Hence the occasional outbreaks of my temper, fits and bursts of violence ; a violence once habitual to me, and not even yet overruled by me to absolute subjection. But to leave all such mischiefs on one side, as foreign to my present matter ; it is certain that my neglect to cultivate and improve to the utmost my religious faculty has been as pernicious to my intellect as to my morality. As often as I have suffered an intermission of such exercises, and foregone my custom of meditation, my spirit, after a while, has become like lead within my bosom, and sunk into abasement ; I have felt, as it were, of the earth, earthly. Then the host of Lilliputians, the follies and fashions of the world, have fixed me in my supineness to the soil, and so subjugated me utterly ; I have fallen away from my high calling, and become a creature of doubt, and restlessness, and confusion ; I have lost my individual soul ; anxiety and feebleness and nervous-

ness have taken place with me of energy and independence.

Nevertheless, my religious feeling, with all its uncertainties and deficiencies, was the best friend by far that my intellect ever had; it was a regulator, a standing force, working, not actively, but constantly, so as to prevent me either from falling off into utter lapsedness, or flying away into all kinds of irregularities. This was a great service. If the ship have but a helm, there is no need to keep it perpetually at work; a turn or two now and then will be sufficient to hold it in its course and give it its due direction. It makes much towards fortitude to possess the consciousness of an unsailing resource, a sure refuge in time of need, although we may resort to it but rarely. The rich man, though he should make but little use of his riches, is at least delivered by his knowledge of them from a most painful dread,—the dread of poverty.

It has occurred to me lately, and I dare say to hundreds before me, that religion, where it is genuine, is not so much a matter of practice, of occasional, incidental practice, as of regular, prevailing habit; otherwise, if we hold to observances and mere points of duty, we shall only act religion instead of doing it. Indeed, I had within me much of this prevailing tone, this religious sentiment, though it showed itself but little upon the surface. It has been said by a great writer, that the religion of a true Christian will declare itself throughout his whole moral constitution, in every thought and deed, just as in certain worms and caterpillars the purity and innocency of their diet is attested by their simple greenness. Certainly I was never so transcolored, nor did I ever even approach such a condition; but there are degrees in all things; one may attain a high point, although it be far short of the summit. My religious feeling

operated upon me as an alterative, gradually, slowly, and almost insensibly ; however, it wrought a change upon my constitution, and by it I was changed. I was as much above what I had been, the mere professing, worldly Christian, as this latter is above the avowed infidel. It is a great thing, the greatest thing of all, for moral and intellectual advancement to feel the force of a true principle. This every body must do ere he can attain to elevation ; and the force of this principle, the efficacy and virtue of religion, as I had before acknowledged, so I began now to feel it. I regarded it as a mariner may regard the north star, not constantly nor fixedly, for often I was careless of it, and considered it not at all ; but in the hour of doubt, and danger, and perplexity, then, indeed, I knew its value ; I looked to its saving light ; I shaped my course by it, and was fully confident in its guidance. I should have done much more. I should have made it my friend and familiar in time of ease, as well as my refuge in dismay ; I should have embraced, and loved, and cherished it as the very soul of happiness ; had I done thus, I should have been as much superior to my present self as I am now superior to my former self,— to the darkness of my first condition. But time was, and is no more. What I had made myself, even that I now am. Alas ! how shall I answer for the manifold faultiness of my self-formation ?

I would say then, reader, — and this corollary of my whole work, this final lesson, I bring you from my own experience, — if you would be great in intellect, give yourself to these things ; if you would acquire an elevation, and clearness, and comprehensiveness of mind ; if you would be superior to fortune, and rise above worldly strifes and miseries, above malice, hatred, envy, and all selfishness and uncharitableness ; if you would disentangle yourself from those most perplexing toils, and walk

in independence and self-sufficiency ; if you would do all these or any of them, — and, mark me, you must be poor indeed in intellect without them, — then I say to you again, cultivate religion. You may take no care of it, and yet exercise yourself, by the use of other faculties, to cleverness and even to talent, but of this be sure, that single influence failing you, a high intellect can never be your endowment. By such means you may quicken and improve the mind, but you can never elevate the soul, for as truly as the soul is the life of the body, so is religion the life of the soul ; all things else, however we may regard them as indispensable, are comparatively worthless, and this one thing, worthless as it is considered in the world, is alone indispensable. With it we begin in security and end in success ; for the confidence that is in the Lord knows no failure nor disappointment. It were idle to commend it any further ; its trial is its only worthy commendation. It was said by one of the old heathen poets, “ Let us begin from God.” We have adopted but too many of their vanities ; it were well for us if we would at least take to our hearts this one wise and holy counsel ; let us then do so, else shall we be less Christians than the heathen.

And thus have I brought my history to its close. You see me in my image impressed faithfully upon these pages ; I have set forth the whole course of my intellect from first to last, running it through “ even from my boyish days,” and copying from my memory, as they occurred to me, its quick vicissitudes, its changes between light and darkness, between despair and hope, between triumph and disappointment ; in short, I have recounted the series of my experiments, — true, genuine experiments made upon myself, — a lesson worthy of all acceptance, and study, and observance ; for assure thyself, reader, in intellectual as in natural philosophy it is only

by the practice of experiments that we can hope to be effectual ; we must try ourselves at all points before we can know our faculties, or put them to their use, or give them their right direction. And now I have to cast up my account, to set my hire against my labor, my profit against my loss, and ascertain the balance. How, then, does it stand ? This is the main point, and it should be developed clearly.

In the first place, when all is told, I am neither rich, nor powerful, nor renowned among my fellow-men. My intellectual advancement, whatever it may be, has either fallen short of these things, or left them on one side ; if they be the greatest good, the true riches, then am I poor indeed, and doubtless I should be so regarded in the opinion of many men. " We judge the tree by its fruit," so probably they will tell me ; and it is in vain that on this tree of yours we look for such fruit as is beautiful to the worldly eye or pleasing to the worldly palate. Your philosophy may be well enough for your idle dreamers until they wake from their dreaminess to disappointment ; but for us, what we have proved we will hold fast ; we know better things, we will none of your false ware, — away with it.

However, for myself, I must confess, though it is yet an early day for me to complain, that I have missed, hitherto, these great objects of ambition. But how, and why ? Assuredly not in consequence of my intellectual exertions ; it is not from them that my failure has originated ; — forefend the thought ! — on the contrary, my only chance of success depends on them. I am convinced that Voltaire is right, where he tells us that the spirit of business is the same with the true spirit of literature. The perfection of each is in the union of energy and thoughtfulness, of the active and contemplative essence ; a union commended by Lord Bacon as the con-

centrated excellence of our nature. And of this truth I have had experience. By the course of practice and experiment heretofore recounted by me, I had advanced myself from mere passive childishness of intellect to something like the maturity of manhood. I had vindicated myself from my base and most irksome subjugation to feebleness, nervousness, and the whole host of mental infirmities ; and I had attained, in their stead, a certain degree, not a very high one, I admit, of clearness, comprehensiveness, and confidence, — energy, industry, and perseverance. Now, it is quite certain that these qualities can be no hindrance to the worldly advancement of any man ; on the contrary, they conduce to it necessarily, and most manifestly. Generally, even in these brisk and giddy-paced times, these dogdays of competitive heat, they will command success ; but they cannot do so always. Moreover, as I must admit the truth even when she is a messenger of evil, therefore I allow the fact, that the cultivation of the intellect in its true and proper method, from the very uprightness and highmindedness that it gives, is apt, on some occasions, to throw difficulties in our way, or, rather, to prevent our evasion of them. Where the entrance to preferment is low, and the whole passage crooked, there the worldling has the advantage ; he is then at home ; he can creep and crawl along where he cannot walk uprightly ; while the man of high intellect will stoop to no such degradation. Hence he may miss his points ; as they say in the language of the turf, he is liable to be shut out and precluded from laying himself out fairly in the race. But this, after all, is but the sufferance of a moment ; and as surely as he bears it here, so will he be rewarded for it hereafter ; and, besides, it is in itself but a small matter compared with the great and many advantages for worldly furtherance that belong *in other respects* to intellectual eminence.

But it is a miserable mistake, though by no means an unfrequent one, to suppose that the value of the intellect consists mainly or principally in its sufficiency for our worldly furtherance. The man who can come to such a conclusion is in much the same degree of baseness and absurdity as those who were followers of our Saviour only for the sake of the loaves and fishes. We value intelligence high, not because it may lead us to such things, as, indeed, it often does, but because it raises us above them. He who has the fewest wants is the nearest to the gods ; so it was said by a philosopher, and there is much truth in the saying. To be free from imaginary cravings is in itself a great fortune ; greater than the greatest wealth of the greatest leviathans in riches can enable them to reach. Not that I am one of those who regard the advantages of this world as things absolutely of no account. Good houses, and good clothes, and a good diet, and good possessions generally, are welcome, for the most part, even to the most rational man. I would not detract from them ; let them pass for their full value ; only thus much would I say, that the only effect upon our welfare of these and all other external things is by their impressions upon the mind. But impressions from without, as I have already stated, never fail to be dulled and deadened by repetition. We become gradually indifferent to them ; at last we regard them but little, if at all ; the place that they should supply is become a mere blank to us. But our intellectual habits, on the contrary, are strengthened by exercise ; they become quicker, more vivid, and more agreeable from day to day ; even where they do nothing more, they fill the void of our existence, and that most pleasingly. Besides, as the mind is the man, we must address ourselves to the mind if we would procure the man's enjoyment ; we must frame it to energy, and quickness, and sensibility, else is the heart like

lead, a cold, heavy, inert, impassible mass. A person of loose, and feeble, and listless disposition will be feeble and listless still, though he be surrounded with pleasurable resources. They will merely tantalize him ; he cannot make them available ; he has not strength enough to extract from them the virtue, the efficacy towards happiness, that really belongs to them. He can do nothing with great means ; whereas the man of intelligence, quick, lively, and full of spirit, can make much of very little means, turn all things to account, find everywhere a soul of gladness, “and good in every thing.” Moreover, the wealth of this world labors to the end of happiness by a very cumbrous and unwieldy apparatus ; whereas the intellect acts immediately, goes straight to its mark, and hardly ever fails of it.

Thus am I requited. This is the service that my mind, with all the pains that I have bestowed upon it, has rendered me ; and, verily, the reward is not such as to attract the worldly eye, or kindle the lust of covetousness. There is nothing of show or glitter in it ; nothing of pomp or circumstance, — it is sterling, but simple gold. In the world’s esteem I am not a jot the wealthier for its possession ; except, indeed, so far as it has saved me from wastefulness and profligacy. Neither by its means have I arrived, nor am I ever likely to arrive, at greatness. It speaks not in the trumpet-blast of fame, but in the still voice of consciousness. Nor yet am I altogether sure that my mind, as I have framed it, will insure me what *is called* success in life, for this depends not on one’s self ; occasion may be wanting to it, competition may keep it out, accident may frustrate it.

But, though it has given me none of these things, it has done me a far better service, inasmuch as it has enabled me to forego them, and to live contentedly without *them*. It can never assure me the favors of Fortune,

but it has made me independent of her. By its aid I can find my happiness in myself, instead of looking for it anxiously, and hurriedly, and vainly, in things without me. This is my reward ; and, on the whole, comparing what I have gained with what I have undergone, I am well satisfied with it,—satisfied to the very fulness of gratitude.

I do not mean to say that the habitual exercise of the intellect ends necessarily in this result ; but, at least, it tends to it necessarily ; and, when combined with religious feeling, it cannot fail to work on others as it did on me ; to ensure them, that is, a firm and steady footing throughout their walk of life, to render them superior to casualties, and to endow them with the strength and self-sufficiency of the man described by Horace :—

*“In se totus, teres atque rotundus,
In quem manca ruit semper Fortuna.”*

These are great endowments, glorious gifts ; but there is one above them all, and, indeed, beyond all price, that may be considered as belonging, not exclusively, but properly, to intellectual superiority. This is the development of religion. For there is much of mutual dependence between the mind and soul ; they lend aid, each to the other, and conspire amicably. I believe that a certain degree of intellectual force is absolutely necessary for the existence of true religion. It is only by thought that we can arrive at reason. Reason alone, calm, reflective reason, is equal to the subjugation of the passions ; and the passions must first be subjugated ere religion can prove itself. I have stated this truth elsewhere ; in an earlier part of my book I have dwelt upon it more at large. I offer it again here, not to insist upon it any further, but in order that the impression of this religious advantage may be the last upon my reader's mind.

Truly, then, did Solomon say unto us, "Wisdom is the principal thing ; therefore get wisdom ; and, with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee ; she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee ; love her, and she shall keep thee." Such is his injunction, and I will not weaken it by any addition of my own. This only will I say, that the prize so set forth by him is open to every man ; and he who refuses it, who turns away from his happiness when it is offered him on so fair terms, is guiltier, in my judgment, than the suicide. To point out the way of its attainment, to prove it by my experience, is the object of this book. There may be other and better methods. It is very likely that mine is not the best, or surest, or most philosophical one ; but it is sufficient for all those who will only attend to it earnestly, and to such do I commend it.

Here, then, my work is at its close ; and may the blessing of Heaven rest upon it, not for my sake, but for that of many. May they use it, and prove it, and find their profit in it. Their success will be my own. I care not for any other reward than the consciousness thus to have contributed to the sum of human happiness.

THE END.

AS
JL









